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SUPERGIRL RETURNS

Showrunners on what's next for Kara Zor-El and why 2016 is the year the superwomen soar



BEYOND THE WALL
ALLEGIANT
Shailene Woodley on upping the stakes for Divergent 3

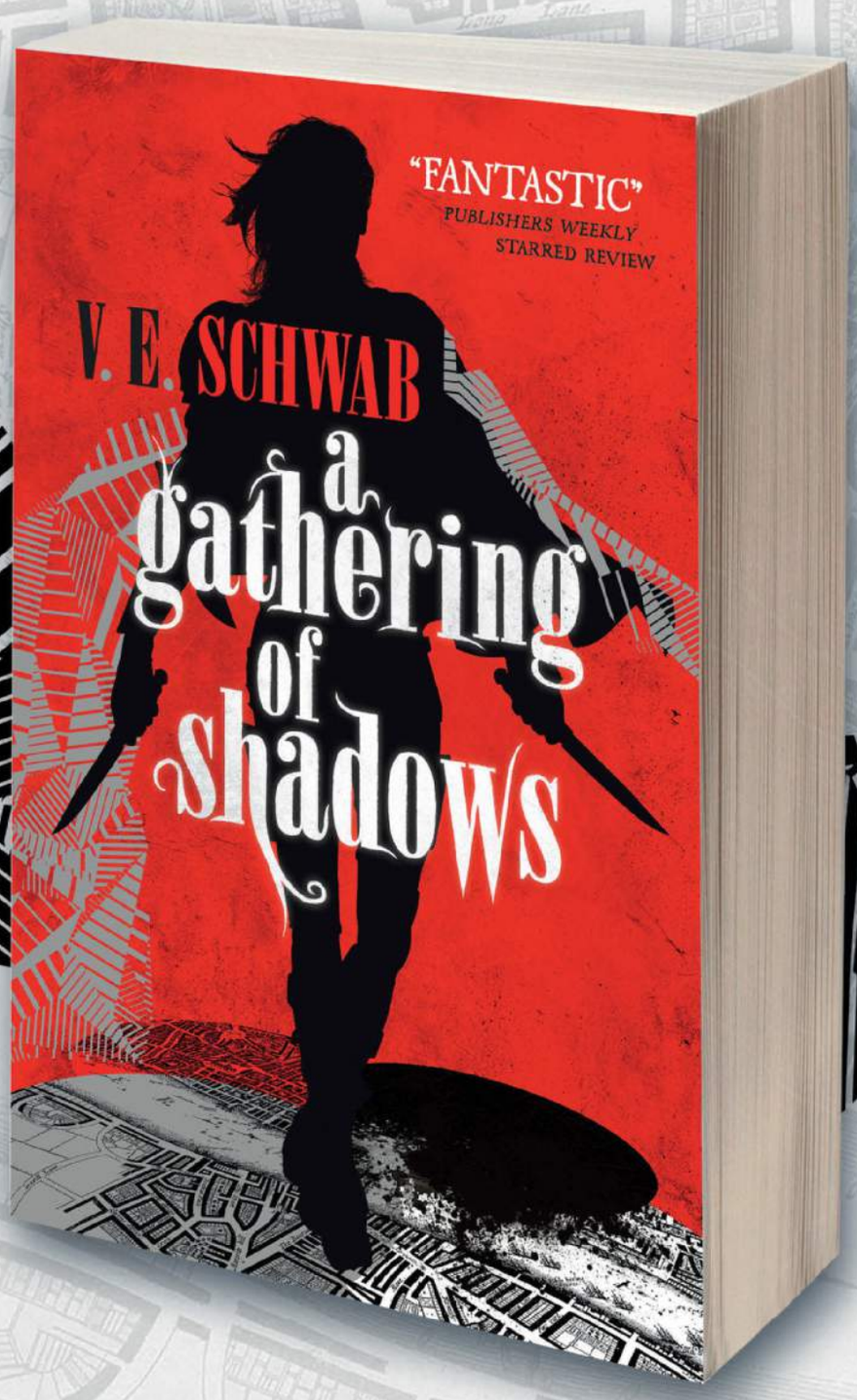
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PRAISE FOR *A DARKER SHADE OF MAGIC:*

"EXCELLENT WORLD BUILDING" - SF Signal

"MIGHTY STORYTELLING" - i09.com



DON'T MISS V.E. SCHWAB'S THRILLING NEW FANTASY NOVEL

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There's no escaping from superheroes on either TV or at the cinema, but when they're this much fun, would you really want to?

It seems like wherever you turn, someone with a cape and can-do outlook is there to save the day. Standing proud among this exciting new breed is *Supergirl*, who hit the ground running then promptly soared into the distance – and with the second half of Season One soon to be upon us, we have every faith that she'll continue to surpass expectations.

She isn't the sole superhero voice though. The coming months will see *Arrow* and *The Flash* return to wrap up their respective seasons, and now we also have *Legends Of Tomorrow* bringing time travel into the mix.

Sure, it's a superhero show, but you haven't seen anything like this before, and we have all the behind-the-scenes access you could possibly want to go with it.

But we're just scratching the surface of a jam-packed issue, filled with first-hand wisdom from some of the genre's biggest names: Greg Nicotero on *The Walking Dead*; Shailene Woodley on *Allegiant*; Ben Wheatley on *High-Rise*; Bryan Fuller on *American Gods*, and much, much more. Couple this with our on-set expose of E4's future hit *The Aliens*, and complete guide to the original *Avengers*, and you have a sci-fi mag like no other.

Has there ever been a better time to be a sci-fi fan?

Steve

Steve Wright
Deputy Editor

GET EXCITED ABOUT DAREDEVIL SEASON 2

Marvel's first Netflix series nailed its colours firmly to the mast with its grim and blood-splattered first year, and if the introduction of Jon Bernthal as the Punisher is anything to go by, it will almost continue in this vein. Matt Murdock isn't averse to doling out the odd crippling injury himself, so it says something if he and Frank Castle come to blows. The best possible result? Punisher getting his own spin-off show. Marvel, make it happen...

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MEET THE TEAM

Q. What is your favourite Alan Rickman or David Bowie movie?



James Hoare
Editor in Chief
A. Ashes To Ashes
Haunting Alex's dreams was the best cameo he never had.



Steve Wright
Deputy Editor
A. The Prestige
Bowie imitated life perfectly as Nikola Tesla.



Jonathan Hatfull
Features Editor
A. Galaxy Quest
By Grabthar's Hammer, by the suns of Warvan...



Poppy-Jay Palmer
Senior Staff Writer
A. Harry Potter
Snape was a douche bag, but Rickman played him perfectly.



Marcus Faint
Art Editor
A. Labyrinth
Dance Magic Dance! Just brilliant use of Bowie's talents.



Jen Neal
Production Editor
A. Dogma
Rickman as Metatron being joyously fed up with the world.

Portal

Your essential, trustworthy and unrivalled guide to the latest genre happenings



STAR TREK: THE 50TH FRONTIER

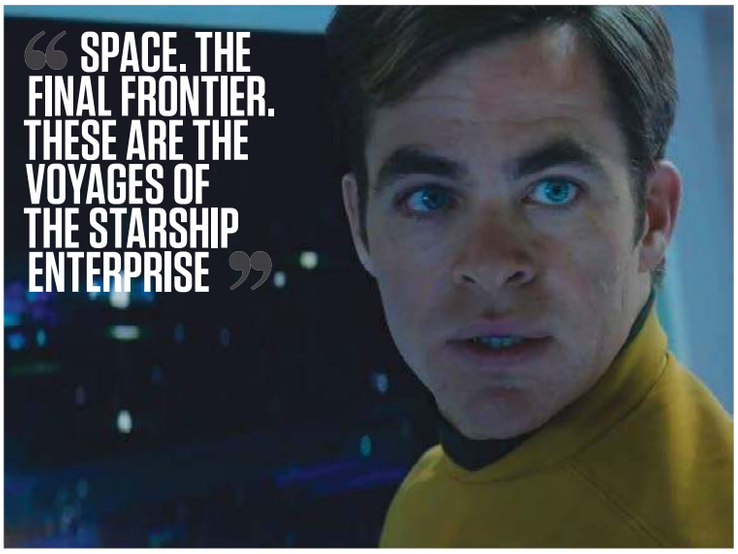
Get your party Starfleet uniform on and start celebrating... WORDS **POPPY-JAY PALMER**

Space: the final frontier. These are the voyages of the starship Enterprise. Its five-year mission: to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilisations, to boldly go where no man has gone before." It's been almost 50 years since those words were first uttered, and it's been almost 50 years since the world instantly fell in love with one of the greatest science fiction franchises of all time.

Gene Roddenberry's campy space adventure exploded in ways no one could have predicted. Even half a century later, it is continuing to spawn new properties and inspire new generations of fans to delve deep into sci-fi. From *The Original Series* to the *Animated Series*, and the books, comic-books and videogames, not to mention the rebooted movies, *Star Trek* is iconic, and it's unstoppable. And this year, on 8 September 2016, on the 50th anniversary of the very first episode, you can be damn sure that we're going to celebrate the occasion. But why wait until September? Why not make it last the full year? Here's why 2016 is going to be the best Trekkie year yet...

STAR TREK BEYOND

After three years of no *Star Trek* movies, we're gasping for another one. But things look like they're going to be a bit different this time around. Unlike the 2009 reboot and its sequel, *Star Trek Into Darkness*, JJ 'defected to *Star Wars*' Abrams isn't directing. He is, however, serving as a producer, so there will probably still be some lovely lens flare to look forward to – we'll be disappointed if there aren't.



008 STAR WARS 8



What we want to see in Rian Johnson's Force Awakens follow-up

011 FRANKENSTEIN



Candyman duo Bernard Rose and Tony Todd talk reinventing Mary Shelley

013 DOUGLAS BOOTH



One on one with the Pride And Prejudice And Zombies star

016 NINA FOREVER



Directors the Blaine brothers reveal all on the year's weirdest horror movie

Instead, it will be *Fast And Furious 6*'s Justin Lin helming the film. In all honesty, Lin's background was reflected in the first trailer for *Star Trek Beyond*; even from a minute and a half of footage, it looked as though the film is going to be one big, crazy car chase, but in space instead of the mean streets of London or Rio. That's not necessarily a bad thing though. For that minute and a half of footage, we didn't stop grinning.

According to the cast and crew, *Star Trek Beyond* is going to be celebrating the franchise's 50th birthday along with the fans, so expect a lot of knowing nods to what has gone on before. "I think everybody behind the scenes wanted to pay real true homage to the Sixties and the birth of the series, so I think it has that kind of throwback flavour," Chris Pine, aka Captain James Tiberius Kirk, told *Entertainment Tonight*. The homage will come in the form of little nods to the original series, and gorgeous new retro-style uniforms, complete with quite impressive shoulder pads.

THE TV SERIES

It has been a decade since *Star Trek* was last on TV, but that is about to change. The internet went nuts back in November last year when it was announced that a brand new series was making its way to the small screen. What better 50th anniversary gift could there be than that?

Technically, the series will just miss the anniversary, what with it being set to premiere on CBS All Access in January 2017, but it's still less than a year away. Less than a year before we get a new ship, a new cast of characters and a whole load of new Starfleet space adventures. Reboot co-writer and co-producer Alex Kurtzman and *Limitless* and *Sleepy Hollow*'s Heather Kadin will be stepping in as executive producers, but the series is still yet to find a showrunner (unless it already bagged one in secret, obviously).

THE FAN STUFF

If you really want to get into the *Star Trek* celebratory spirit – and we mean *really* – there are a ton of other events kicking off this year all over the world, and a sci-fi anniversary wouldn't be a sci-fi anniversary without a full-on, all-out convention. For the last 15 years, the Creation Entertainment *Star Trek* convention at the Rio Suites Hotel, Las Vegas, has been attracting fans and stars alike far and wide. And because 2016 marks the semicentennial, this year's is going to be the biggest, most full-on, all-out convention any Trekkie ever did see, lasting a whopping five days and welcoming over 100 special guests, including stars and crew from *The Original Series*, *Deep Space Nine*, *Voyager*, *The Next Generation* and more. What a week that will be.



***Star Trek Beyond* isn't the only big *Trek*-related event this year.**





The show has come a long way since *The Original Series*.

Another event that you need to get yourself down to immediately is the *Star Trek: The Ultimate Voyage* concert. Currently touring the United States, the symphonic tribute to 50 years of *Star Trek* music has already been wowing crowds from Orlando to New Orleans, and there's still time to catch it before it wraps up in May at Jones Hall, Houston, Texas.

Sadly, *Star Trek: The Cruise* already passed, having set sail in January, but can you even imagine what that must have been like? An official *Star Trek* cruise! On an official *Star Trek* cruise ship! The only way it could sound any more cool would be if it was a cruise to space, rather than the Caribbean. But, you know. We've heard the Caribbean is nice too.

Star Trek Beyond will be released in cinemas on 22 July.



You can bet William Shatner will be involved somewhere along the line.



2016 will be an exciting year for all things *Star Trek*.







WARNING STAR WARS SPOILERS AHEAD

I

VIII THINGS WE WANT TO SEE IN STAR WARS: EPISODE VIII

The Force Awakens obviously wasn't enough. Here's what we want to see happen next...

WORDS **POPPY-JAY PALMER**

I MORE LUKE SKYWALKER

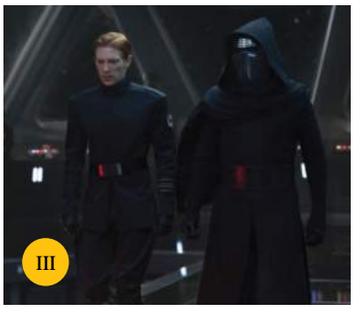
Luke is obviously going to get a bigger role in *Episode VIII*. If not, then that final scene was very misleading. But we want him back as his old self, wielding a lightsaber and saving the day instead of acting as the series' magical Jedi MacGuffin. We have so many questions for him: what has he been doing on Ahch-To (the name of the planet we find him on, if you were wondering)? Why did he leave in the first place? Does he have any illegitimate children? We appreciate that a new generation of *Star Wars* means new characters, but it wouldn't hurt to feature its original hero a little more.

II CLARIFY THE RESISTANCE AND REPUBLIC'S RELATIONSHIP

Out of all the questions we were left with in *The Force Awakens*, this is probably the one that had us the most confused.



II



III

Thanks to the film's opening crawl, we know that General Organa has 'the support of the Republic' in leading the Resistance, but what does that actually mean? The tie-in material has since clarified that the Resistance is effectively an armed militia formed by Leia to combat the First Order (with the Republic apathetic to the situation), but this status quo needs to be confirmed on the screen.

III FLESH OUT KYLO REN'S BACK STORY

Adam Driver's Kylo Ren is easily one of the most fascinating genre villains in recent years. After just over two hours with him, we already want to see more. Everything he does and says is intriguing and mesmerising. He's one messed up son of a gun, but what made him that way? We already know that his obsession with his ancestry might have something to do with it, but what was

his childhood like? Did he get on with his dad in his early years? Was he friends with the young pilot Poe Dameron? Was the Dark Side a teenage rebellion that went too far? Will he come to his senses before he completes his training once and for all?

IV MORE CAPTAIN PHASMA

When *Game Of Thrones* star Gwendoline Christie was confirmed for *The Force Awakens*, we all experienced months' worth of euphoria-induced fever dreams. Brienne of Tarth? In *Star Wars*? Could this film *be* any more perfect? The excitement only doubled when we found out which character she was to play: a chrome-plated Stormtrooper leader named Captain Phasma. But then when the film finally came around, as brilliant as it was, we were somewhat disappointed by the lack of Phasma. We have our fingers crossed for more of her, hopefully free from the trash compactor, in *Episodes VIII* and *IX*, and a look at her origins would be the icing on the cake.

V SHOW US WHAT SNOKE CAN DO

Sure, Snoke is the Supreme Leader of the First Order, but what can he do? Masquerading as a giant is quite menacing, but sitting on a throne and barking orders in a shadowy chamber is not. And while we're on the subject, what does Snoke *want*? The First Order have threatened, murdered and goose-stepped their way across the galaxy, but they haven't actually revealed what their ideal end-game is. We know they're looking for Luke Skywalker, but what are they going to do after that? We're sure all will be revealed once they manage to intercept the Jedi, but until then it all seems a little bit aimless.

VI HAVE A CANONICALLY GAY POE DAMERON

Over the course of 13 hours and 37 minutes of *Star Wars*, there have been exactly zero gay characters. If there ever was a time to get the LGBT space train rolling it's now, especially with some of the spin-off books starting to feature same-sex couples and gay heroes, like Sinjir Rath Velus from Chuck Wendig's *Star Wars: Aftermath* novel, in leading roles. And who better to begin with than Poe, the best pilot in the Resistance? So what is Disney so afraid of? Do they know what a canonically gay Poe would mean to LGBT+ kids growing up with the new trilogy? Young fans who've never had strong gay characters to look up to would have one flying jets, saving lives and being awesome.

VII A CONFRONTATION BETWEEN KYLO REN AND HIS MOTHER

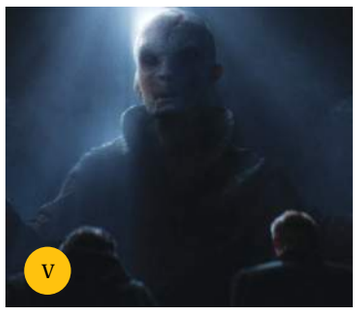
We've seen Kylo Ren interact with his father, but how would he talk to his mother? A heart-to-heart with Leia would create a perfect opportunity to reveal more about his upbringing. We need this. Can you even imagine? There would be a teary reunion once Ren inevitably returns to the Light Side, and then Leia would scold him and make him take the bins out at the Resistance base when everyone finally got over him murdering his father and countless other innocent people. Or it would go the other way, with Ren killing his mother too. Wow, we didn't think of that. We've changed our minds. Keep him well away from everyone we hold dear.

VIII MORE REY OUTSIDE THE FILM

Many would say that one of *The Force Awakens*' major failings has been its blindingly obvious exclusion of women on the marketing side of things, like when Rey, the main character, was left out of a *Star Wars Monopoly* set in favour of Darth Vader. He's not even in the film! After a *lot* of criticism from fans, Hasbro came forward and said Rey wasn't included "to avoid revealing a key plot line that she takes on Kylo Ren and joins the Rebel Alliance." That's as flimsy an excuse as we ever did hear, considering she was one of the first characters – in the very first teaser, no less – to be introduced, not to mention have her name revealed. In any case, fans loved Rey. Make more use of her.

Star Wars: Episode VIII will be released in cinemas on 15 December 2017.


IV


V

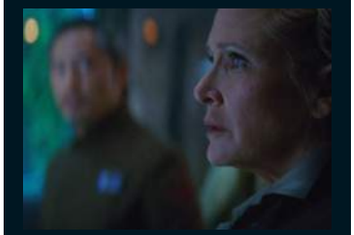

VI


VII


VIII

THE FORCE AWAKENS EXPLAINED

The mysteries the tie-in material resolved



WHO IS THE LADY ON HYDORIA?

When Starkiller Base launches its weapon against the Hosnian system, a strange amount of focus is paid to a previously unseen person at the front. It turns out that this is Korr Sella, who Leia sent as an envoy on her behalf to emphasise the threat posed by the First Order. Too late, as it turns out...



WHO IS LOR SAN TEKKA?

The Force Awakens Visual Dictionary sheds further light on Max von Sydow's character, describing him as an acolyte of the 'Church of the Force', a group dedicated to preserving the memory of the Jedi. His knowledge of Kylo Ren's heritage indicates that he was involved with Luke's Jedi Academy, at least for a time, although as ever we're sure we'll find out the extent of this later on.



KYLO REN DOES KNOW THAT DARTH VADER TURNED AWAY FROM THE DARK SIDE, RIGHT?

Yes, he does. However, Alan Dean Foster's novelisation expands on this in a conversation between Ren and Snoke, with the latter describing Anakin Skywalker's redemption as a moment of weakness that led to the destruction of the Empire, using this as an example of why Ren mustn't give in to the 'temptation' of the Light Side. Basically, Snoke is a master manipulator.

THE ART OF THE FORCE AWAKENS

Incredible images from behind the scenes of Star Wars Episode VII

WORDS **STEVE WRIGHT**

Over three years in the making, the finished version of *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* has changed almost beyond recognition. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in this collection of concept art, more of which you can find in *The Art Of Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, a breathtaking collection, of art, images and drawings from one of the most eagerly awaited films of all time. Here, the artists themselves talk about bringing the saga to life.



The Art Of Star Wars: The Force Awakens by Phil Szostak is available to buy now, published by Abrams.

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© Alzmann and McCaig

"Iain and I were thinking about Jeff Bridges in *True Grit* (2010). Everyone loved the idea of a duster and the long combed-back hair with the beard. They wanted it to look like the old Sergio Leone–style posters." ***Alzmann***



© Davies



"One idea I had was, what if there's literally a big fish tank? The idea came from *The Right Stuff*, where they're all at a tiki bar and this mermaid comes down to flirt with one of the astronauts." ***Clyne***

© Clyne



"You can see the little trigger crystal on the far right one – that's the most primitive lightsaber there is. [The rest] is styling." ***Church***

© Church



© Manzella





© Allsopp





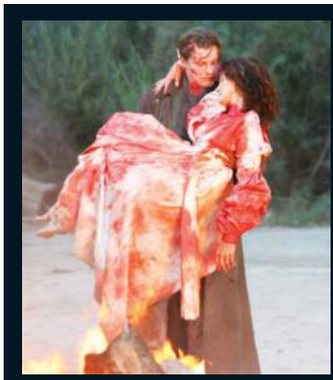
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Keep calling back to the **SciFiNow** magazine YouTube channel for new and exciting videos you will find nowhere else.



IT'S ALIVE!

Candyman director Bernard Rose on updating Frankenstein

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

Nobody's done Frankenstein justice yet – not the way Mary Shelley wrote it. So even though Bernard Rose's new take on the classic Promethean tale brings it to modern-day LA, he was determined that it feel like a proper adaptation.

"You can't ignore the [James] Whale movie; at the same time I wanted to get back to what Shelley had intended," Rose explains. "Shelley intuited right at the very beginning that the object of science would be to create consciousness. She was a visionary."

In this version, Adam (Xavier Samuel) is created by Danny Huston and Carrie-Ann Moss' husband-and-wife scientists, but the soulful creature is cast out when his body degrades. "[Shelley] created a sensitive, sophisticated creature that has a soul," enthuses Rose. "She didn't create a lumbering beast who wants to rip people's heads off. He's a human being, and that's the tragedy of Frankenstein."

By keeping the film so close to Shelley's original story, it feels faithful, and it's definitely a success. "Bernard is one of the most confident without being overly egotistical directors I've ever worked with," enthuses Tony Todd, who plays Eddie. "He's a very assured individual, he writes meticulously, and he does his research. It was a joy."

Frankenstein will be released on DVD and Blu-ray on 22 February.

WINTER IS HERE

Here are six of the many reasons why we can't wait for Game Of Thrones' return

WORDS **POPPY-JAY PALMER**



Season Five ended with Arya going blind after taking a life that wasn't hers to take.

1 We've caught up with the books

It has taken six years, but the television series has finally caught up with the books. Or it almost has; we still have some idea of where Arya's story is heading. But other than that, those who don't read the books are in the clear from spoilers, probably forever, which is reason to celebrate.

2 Tyrion is back in charge

Tyrion Lannister hasn't always had an easy life. He's often mistreated and condescended to, and there was that one time when he was accused of poisoning Joffrey and almost executed for it. But he's also very much the rock star of *Game Of Thrones*. He shone the most during Season Two, when he stood in as Hand of the King and as good as ruled King's Landing with a full-on battle and everything. As Daenerys fled Meereen on her dragon at the end of Season Five, Tyrion is back in a position of authority once more, with Varys at his side.



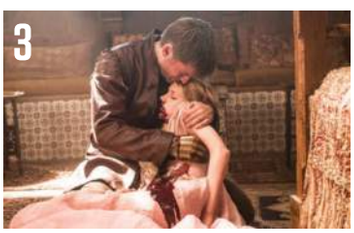
How will Tyrion fare as ruler of Meereen?

3 Season Five's cliffhangers were a bitch

So many cliffhangers, so little time. After sitting on mysteries for almost a year, Season Six will finally (hopefully) offer resolutions to at least some of them. The one that we're most eager to see resolved is obviously the answer to the question: is Jon Snow actually dead? We're guessing no, seeing as his face was featured on the season's first promotional poster and, you know, we want him to be alive. We're also bursting to find out what happens to Theon and Sansa after they jumped from the walls of Winterfell to freedom/their deaths, if Brienne kills Stannis, and whether Myrcella's poisoning proved to be fatal.







4 A cast of new characters

As if there weren't enough characters to keep track of already, Season Six is sending in some new ones, including the Three-Eyed Raven (as a physical man, not a dream bird) played by the ever-brilliant Max von Sydow, and Ian McShane in a mystery role. A couple of current characters' family members are joining in the fun too. Theon and Yara's uncle, Euron Greyjoy (Pilou Asbæk), is making an appearance, which should be fun seeing as he's a thoroughly horrible human being in the books, and Samwell Tarly's entire family are dropping in too, so we'll finally get to meet his father Randyll (James Faulkner), mother Melessa (Samantha Spiro), brother Dickon (Freddie Stroma) and sister Talla (Rebecca Benson). Aww.



© Georgia Baird



5 Old faces are returning

Season Five was difficult, what with dream team Bran Stark (Isaac Hempstead-Wright) and Hodor (Kristian Nairn) away to see how far north the north goes, but the new season will finally play host to their return and see Bran training under the Three-Eyed Raven. Brynden Tully (Clive Russell), who we haven't heard from since Season Three, is also back this year, presumably continuing to hold the castle in Riverrun in Robb Stark's name. Someone else we haven't seen for a while is lovely Gendry (Joe Dempsie). He's not confirmed to be making an appearance this season, but we're still holding out for a late return.

After a year-long break, Bran Stark is back.



God knows where he is right now. We just hope he hasn't drowned.

6 Let it snow

Winter has been coming for five seasons, but now it's finally here. Things are sure to get colder and a lot more intriguing as we watch the residents of Westeros deal with a world drowned in snow and ice. Perhaps this is the Season (or season, ha!) that the Stark family finally get back on top of things. But whatever happens, one thing is for certain: White Walkers will rule the land.

Game Of Thrones Season Six premieres on 25 April on Sky Atlantic.



FIVE THINGS WITH DOUGLAS BOOTH

The Pride And Prejudice And Zombies star on throwing the undead into Jane Austen

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

1 Mash-up madness

After years of development hell, the film of Seth Grahame-Smith's literary mash-up *Pride And Prejudice And Zombies* has finally made it to the big screen. However, when Douglas Booth was offered the role of the dashing Mr Bingley, he was taken aback by the title. "Yeah, I was slightly confused at the beginning, but as soon as I spoke to friends, lots of people had heard of it!" he laughs. "When they presented it they said the first draft of the script was written by David O Russell, and there's Lily James and Sam Riley, I thought, 'God, this must be great.' It sounded enticing from the off."

2 Lost in Austen

As you might have guessed from title, the movie uses the plot of Jane Austen's masterpiece, but with a living dead twist. The Bennets are living in an England under siege from zombies, but it's still definitely England. "The movie's so funny, but I think that comes out of, as actors, we couldn't be in on the joke as, it were," Booth explains. "We were just in a slightly different reality of, 'There has been a plague for 70 years, and it has created zombies.' And the cast is not B-movie at all; the people who'd be doing it in a straight-up version are doing it in the zombie version."

3 Dead and loving it

Just as the Austen part of the title is important, Booth tells us that the film takes its zombies very seriously. "From the off, we refer to them as zombies. We're not trying to shy away from the fact that they are zombies or trying to cover it up as anything else," he enthuses. "It's one of the first things you hear people say: zombies. We're not embarrassed by the fact that they're zombies. We're not; the zombies are hilarious and great, and in a period setting like that they're perfect. Why shy away from it?"

4 Working with visionaries

At just 23, Booth has already worked with some incredible filmmakers, including Darren Aronofsky, Lone Scherfig and the Wachowskis. "Telling the story of Noah was never a dream of mine, but to work with Darren Aronofsky was," he tells us. "At the time of *Jupiter Ascending* there was an opportunity to work on one of these YA franchises, and I remember asking [Aronofsky], 'Do I do this, or do I go and work with the Wachowksis?' and he was like, 'Go and work with the Wachowskis!' I've always tried to follow the interesting route and learn from these great directors."

5 The wow of the Wachowskis

Booth played the ludicrously wealthy alien Titus Abraxas in the Wachowskis' bonkers sci-fi epic *Jupiter Ascending*, and he tells us that there's nothing like being on a set with the *Sense8* creators. "I had the most amazing experience getting to know them. Lana and Andy's imagination is quite unlike anything I've ever witnessed. There's not really anybody else quite like them; they are really individual in their flair and their ways. They just created what they wanted to create, there wasn't anyone telling them what to do. I just want to see that vision all the time. To get their vision off the ground is something quite epic."

Pride And Prejudice And Zombies will be released in UK cinemas on 11 February.

"IT'S WRITTEN BY DAVID O RUSSELL, AND THERE'S LILY JAMES AND SAM RILEY. I THOUGHT, 'GOD, THIS MUST BE GREAT'"
DOUGLAS BOOTH

GIVING 100%

Creator Jason Rothenberg on what's next for the Grounders in The 100 Season Three...

WORDS **POPPY-JAY PALMER**

Some described The CW's dystopian YA sci-fi drama *The 100* a "surprise hit" when the first season started airing back in 2014. Sure, it was a hit, but it wasn't really a surprise one, given how awesome the concept was. Now, after 29 gripping and rather bloody episodes, we're left constantly wanting more, which is good for us, seeing as Season Three is just around the corner.

The 100 creator Jason Rothenberg spilled some secrets about the new season at the Television Critics Association press tour last month, and gave fans a preview of what's to come. "We try to create impossible choices all the time," he said. "Last season, I knew that moment of choice was going to come for Clarke at the end, and where she was going to have to pull the lever or not and kill all of Mount Weather to save her people. We could have gone a little bit easier and saved the kids – and this was a standards and practices nightmare – but I wanted to see the cost of it and I wanted people to feel the cost of it."

Something has felt a bit off, with Clarke (Eliza Taylor) in the trailers leading up to the new season. She seems almost feral. The battle against Mount Weather took its toll, and she was last seen in Season Two heading away from Camp Jaha. The third season is set to pick up with Clarke still alone, hunting and living off the land. Perhaps her departure means we'll get to see what else is out there on the Ground.

"One of the things I love to do is expand the world, so we've obviously done that a lot in the first three seasons," says Rotherberg. "But at the same time, the show started with the 100 wanting to kill each other, and could they overcome their internal conflict before the threat of the Grounders wiped them out? Last year, we introduced some new elements and the conflict was a little more external.

"This season we get into, I think, a bigger version of where the show started, which is there's internal conflict. There's a new group that comes in that really mixes things up and creates a lot of conflict internally. We get to know a lot about the Grounders clans, and there's a civil war brewing there too, so, again, it's about, can these people overcome their internal stuff in time to avoid a bigger catastrophe?"

With the dedicated fan base the show has inspired, it will be hard to say goodbye when the time finally comes. But thankfully, Rotherberg seems hopeful that we're still far away from that scenario: "I know what I want the final story to be and where I want these people to end up in the end. I don't know how long that's going to take. I'm not going to sit here and say that I want to do the show as long as I can do it. I want to do the show for as long as it's interesting to me.

"Lord willing, we get a Season Four. We have a good idea of what we want that story to be. If they said, 'This is it. Wrap it up,' we could make this idea I have right now for the wrap-up happen at the end of Season Four, or Five or Eight." We have our fingers crossed for Season Six at the very least.

The 100 Season Three will air this spring on E4.



A lot has happened to Clarke between Season Two and the epic new trailer.



Murphy (Richard Harmon) settles into his bunker.





Bellamy (Bob Morley) is having family troubles.



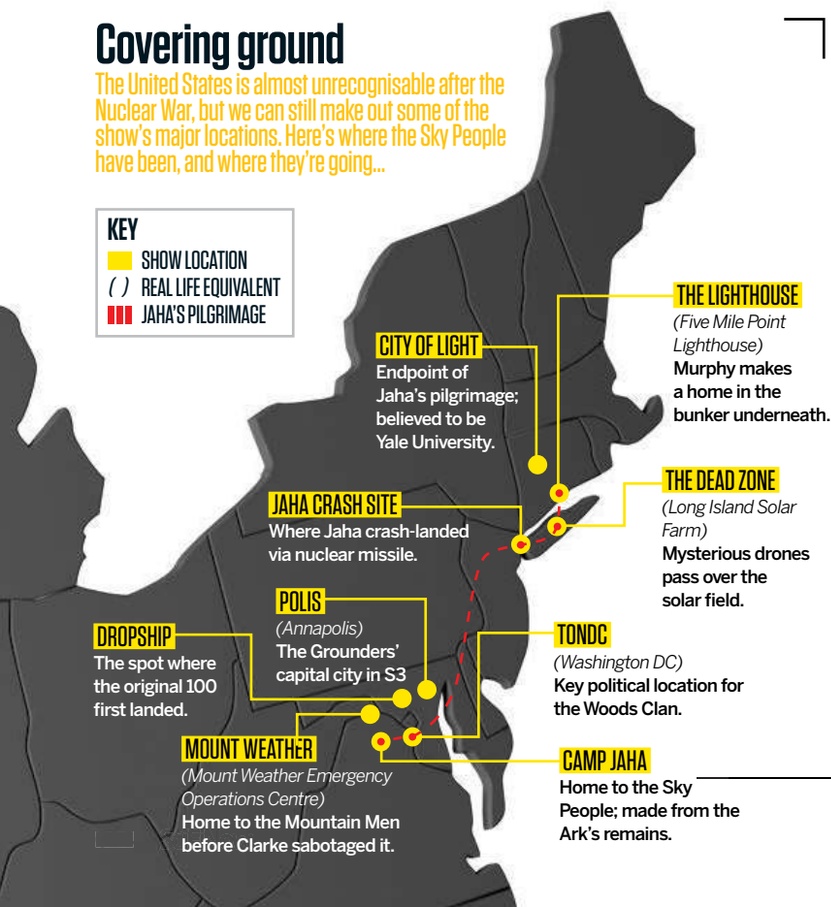
Lexa (Alycia Debnam-Carey) expresses some rage.



New episodes bring new faces.

Covering ground

The United States is almost unrecognisable after the Nuclear War, but we can still make out some of the show's major locations. Here's where the Sky People have been, and where they're going...





Rickman shot to worldwide fame as Severus Snape in the *Harry Potter* films.

ALAN RICKMAN: 1946-2016

By Grabthar's Hammer, you will be remembered

WORDS **POPPY-JAY PALMER**

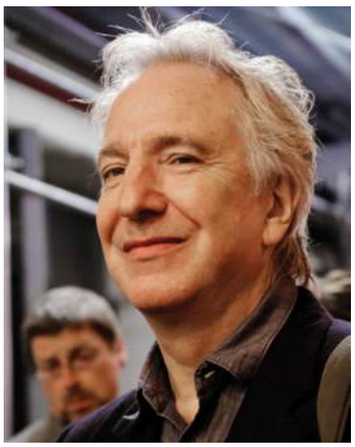
Alan Rickman wasn't a stranger to high praise, having been nominated for and winning plenty of awards for his dramatic projects like *Robin Hood: Prince Of Thieves* and *Rasputin*. His unmistakable voice and unique diction helped him fine-tune an amazing ability to make an impact with every line. But for us, it was Rickman's sci-fi and fantasy roles that made him stand out.

Kevin Smith's biblical comedy *Dogma* marked Rickman's first venture into genre in 1999. In it, he played the Voice of God, Metatron, an archangel whose negative outlook and exasperated attitude had us in stitches. In the same year he appeared in sci-fi spoof *Galaxy Quest* alongside Tim Allen and Sigourney Weaver. Even now, it's difficult to focus on anything else when Dr Lazarus is on screen. It could be his spot-on deadpan delivery. It could be the fact that his costume involved what was essentially an alien swimming cap.

From 2001 to 2011, Rickman starred as Professor Snape in the *Harry Potter* series in perhaps the most well-known role of his film career. Love him or hate him, Rickman brought him magically to life for a generation of *Potter* lovers. Other weird and wonderful roles that stand out include Marvin the Paranoid Android in *Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy,* and the odious Judge Turpin in *Sweeney Todd.* He was a genre gem who will be missed.



As Alexander Dane in cult hit *Galaxy Quest.*



© Marie-LanNguyen



DAVID BOWIE: 1947-2016

Remembering the Starman who blew our minds

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

On 10 January, the world lost one of its true icons: a figure whose work had connected with generations, whose ability to challenge, dare, shape-shift and thrill has arguably never been matched.

There's not a single one of us whose life hasn't been touched by the work of David Bowie in some way, whether it was watching Jareth the Goblin King leading Sarah on a merry dance through the Labyrinth, getting lost in the otherworldly sonic soundscapes of his Berlin period, or listening to Aladdin Sane in your bedroom and realising that you were absolutely not alone.

The global reaction to Bowie's passing was extraordinary, and not just because we all seemed to be united in mourning. During the week that followed, the incredible variety and brilliance of his work was shared, and we saw that no matter who you are, everyone has a favourite Bowie song, performance or moment of their own, and his final album *Blackstar* stands as an incredible final gift.

Bowie's work and persona(s) are so extraordinary that it makes perfect sense that he was claimed by genre fans as one of their heroes, and it goes beyond his calling out into the universe in *Starman*, leaving Major Tom spinning out into space, or his hypnotic performances in films like *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me* or *The Man Who Fell To Earth*.

He always seemed like a wonderful gift from some other world, and we were very, very lucky to have had him here with us for as long as we did. We thank you, Starman, for everything.



Sci-fi fans will remember Bowie for the likes of *The Man Who Fell To Earth* (above) and *Labyrinth.*

COMING UP NEXT

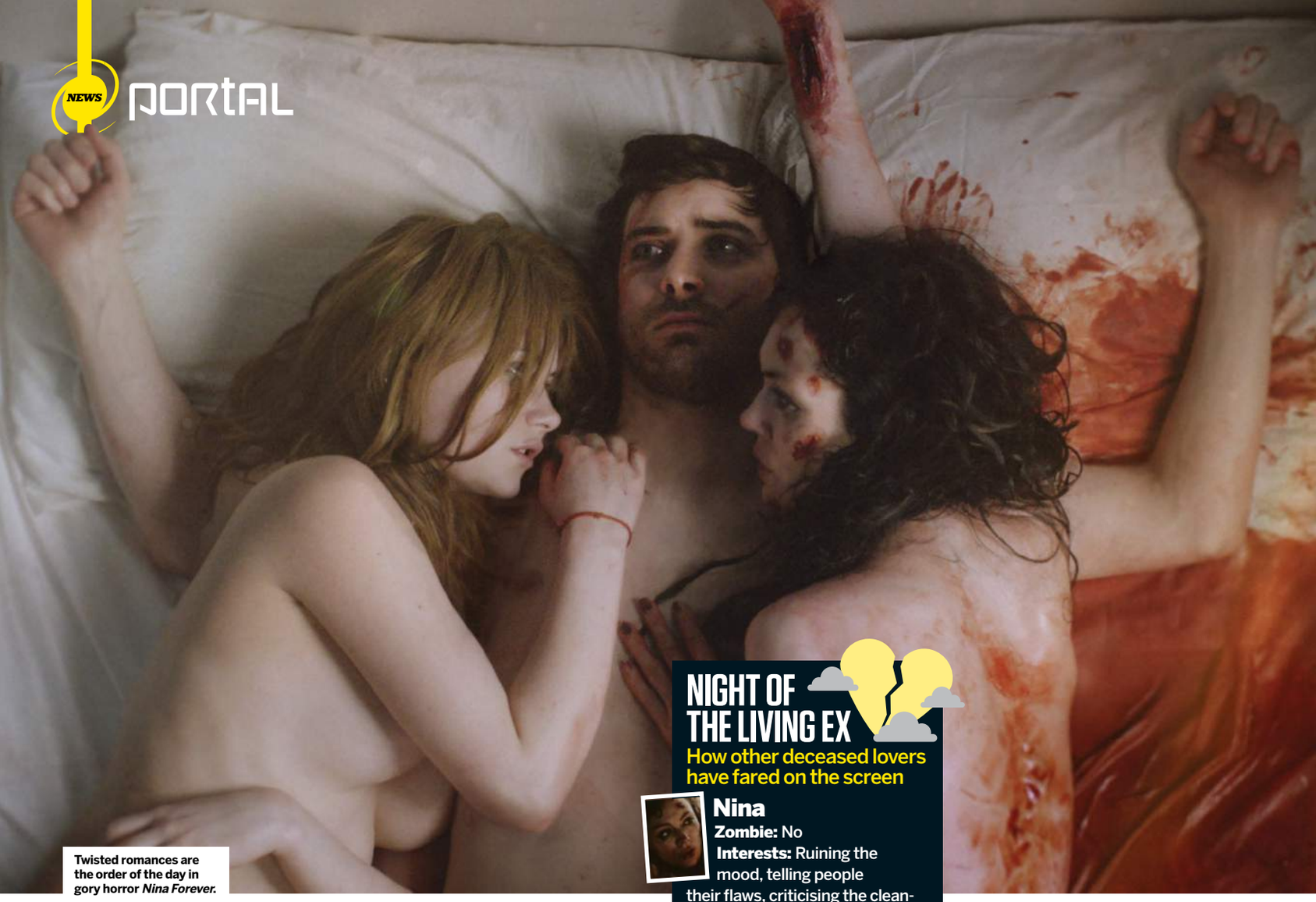
Future genre projects to look out for

People Of Earth
Network: TBS
A journalist researching alien abductions is sceptical when he attends a support group, but he soon gets pulled into a world he had no idea existed.

Powerless
Network: NBC
The Office meets the DC universe in this workplace comedy. It follows the lives of some of the normal humans in a world of superheroes and villains.

Santeria
Network: Starz
A secret war breaks out in Cuba when ancient religions clash. Two undercover agents are quickly pulled into a dangerous world.

Time Travelling Bong
Network: Comedy Central
Cousins Ilana Glazer and Paul Downs discover a time-travelling bong, which they use to get high and explore time and space.



Twisted romances are the order of the day in gory horror *Nina Forever*.

"YOU CAN NEVER COMPETE WITH A DEAD GIRL"

The Blaine Brothers on their stunning horror romance Nina Forever

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

Summing up Nina *Forever* neatly is tricky. It's about love, it's about grief, it's funny, it's sexy, it's morbid, it's sad, and it's got a very complicated love triangle between a grieving guy, his new girlfriend and his dead ex, who appears, covered in blood, whenever they get intimate. It's also brilliant.

"I wrote it as a play, and people were utterly horrified by what I'd written!" laughs Ben Blaine. "It started as a straight study of grief, and one day Nina just started talking to me." Nina (*Utopia*'s Fiona O'Shaughnessy) is an unforgettable creation, broken and bleeding and naked but hilariously cutting as she verbally dismantles Holly (Abigail Hardingham). What makes *Nina Forever* great is that Holly decides to take her on. This isn't another dead girlfriend movie about the grieving boyfriend.

"The most interesting character is Holly," enthuses Chris. "She's the one making an active choice. She's choosing to come back and have this relationship. That whole idea of the manic pixie dream girl; you've chosen the boring guy who gets over a thing to be your lead character when the girl over there seems really interesting. The only reason why she seems totally false is because you've not given her anything to do."

Hardingham gives a stunning performance as a young woman forced to confront some harsh truths about herself, but she didn't face the same hardships as O'Shaughnessy when it came to the practicalities of shooting. "Fake blood goes from being liquid to almost solid within a minute," Chris tells us. "Fi was getting stuck to the bed and she couldn't actually move. Our prosthetics guy said we should use KY Jelly, so we sent our runners into South London to buy up all the KY Jelly they could find."

The suffering was most definitely worth it, as *Nina Forever* has played to a rapturous reception at festivals globally. "Everyone has not been able to be with someone that they wanted to be with, whether that's through someone dying or that person saying please don't come round my house anymore," Ben tells us. "I think there is something in the film that everyone recognises and I think what everyone connects to is the honesty."

"When you have a meeting with industry folk, they go 'What's your one passion project?'" concludes Chris. "They're actually asking you for the weird thing, they're not asking you for the straightforward thing, and so are audiences, they're asking for something that they've not seen before."



Nina Forever will be available on DVD and Blu-ray from 22 February and for download from 15 February.

NIGHT OF THE LIVING EX

How other deceased lovers have fared on the screen

Nina
Zombie: No
Interests: Ruining the mood, telling people their flaws, criticising the clean-up attempts
Most likely to: Ruin the sheets



Beth
Zombie: Yes
Interests: Hiking, flamingo class, going to the attic, mud
Most likely to: Display sudden mood changes



Evelyn
Zombie: Yes
Interests: Saving the environment, recycling, drastic home makeovers
Most likely to: Fit in at Goth night out



Valentina
Zombie: Yes
Interests: Romance, motorcycling, having fun
Most likely to: Insist on getting her father's permission



Frank
Zombie: No
Interests: Puzzle boxes, infidelity, skin-hunting
Most likely to: Do whatever it takes to get his way

HOT TOPICS

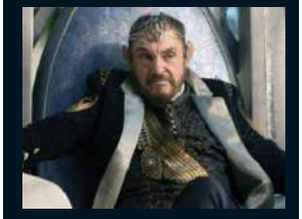
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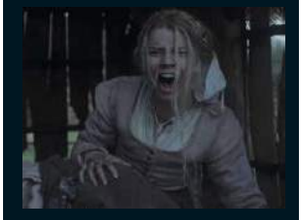
20 BOOKS YOU SHOULD HAVE READ IN 2015
tinyurl.com/gpsh4zp



TOP 10 MOST EXCITING NEW TV SHOWS OF 2016
tinyurl.com/jssnaaf



SHANNARA CHRONICLES IS "LIKE STAR WARS"
tinyurl.com/jazv8mp



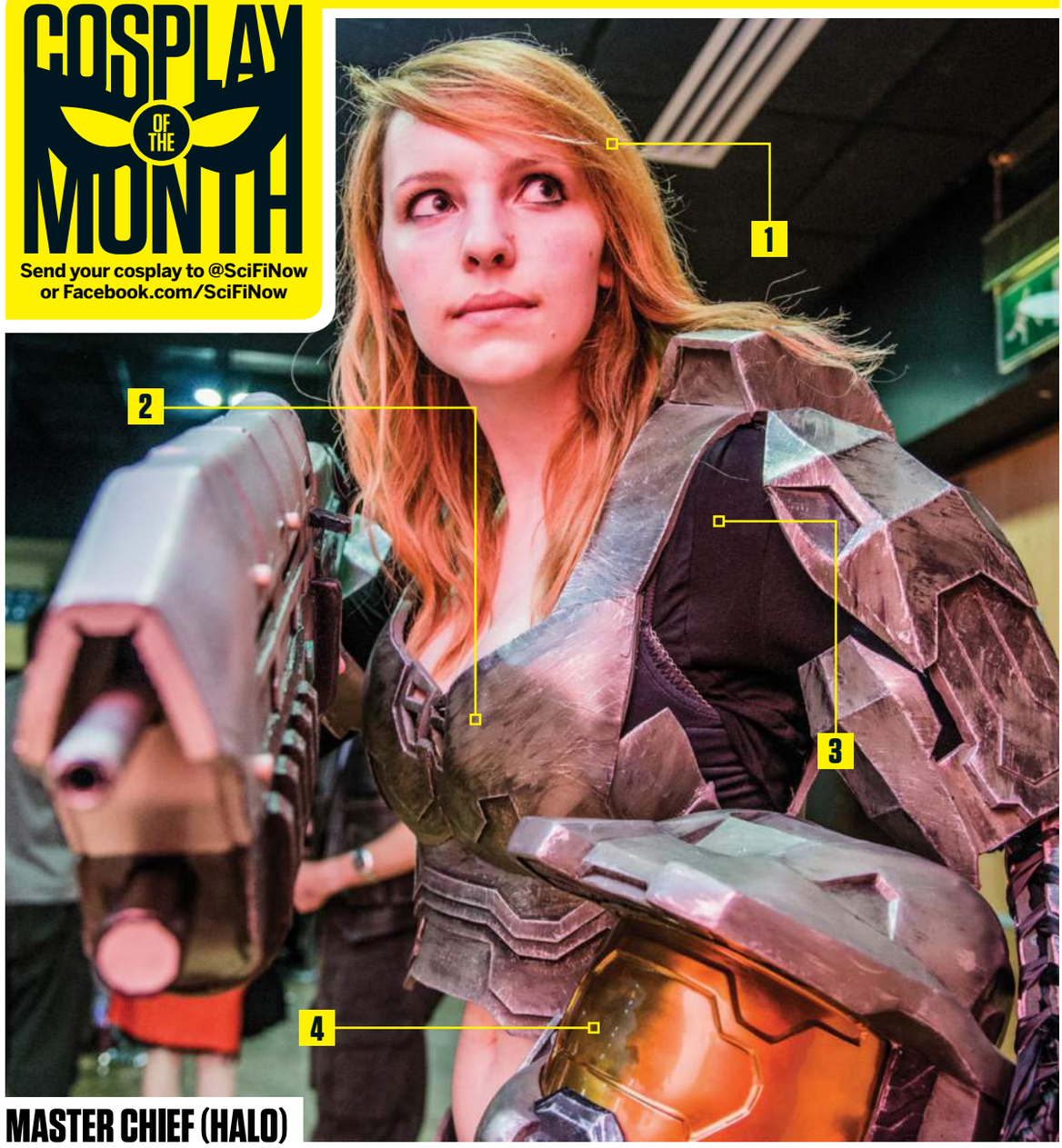
2016 HORROR FILMS YOU NEED TO SEE
tinyurl.com/gqu9pz9



STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS VFX REEL
tinyurl.com/hnhedb6

COSPLAY OF THE MONTH

Send your cosplay to @SciFiNow or Facebook.com/SciFiNow



MASTER CHIEF (HALO)

COSPLAYER: KERRY COSPLAY **FROM:** LONDON **PHOTOGRAPHER:** JAMES SHEPPARD **TWITTER:** @KERRYCOSPLAY **FACEBOOK:** /KERRYCOSPLAY

1 THE CHARACTER

I chose to create Master Chief, as *Halo* has been a big part of my life from a young age. It was one of the very first games my dad taught me to play, and we still play it together to this very day.

I have always been inspired by the *Halo*-style armour, and really wanted a Spartan suit of my own. So I decided to build it!

2 THE COSTUME

To start the process of making the costume, I sourced as many reference images as I could as the armour changes in every *Halo* game.

I made the costume entirely from EVA foam (camping mats to be precise!) so the materials were very easy to source [local camping/outdoors shops]. I created each armour piece from the reference pictures I had gathered and from the in game character.

It was then sprayed them with primer and paint before I added a ton of battle damage.

3 THE DESIGN

There are a number of female Spartans in *Halo*. However, I decided to put a female spin on the main character, Master Chief, as I thought it would be great fun to create.

I tried to stick to the original design as much as possible in order to make it recognisable to *Halo* fans. In an attempt to make the armour appear more feminine, I made it a close fit and more shapely than the original bulky armour.

The cosplay I have created is also convention-friendly, as it was designed with room to breathe – as you probably know, conventions can get very warm. So, 'Mischief' was created.

4 THE ACCESSORIES

All of my inspiration for this cosplay was from playing the videogame. I stuck to the original design of the Master Chief helmet as that is the most recognizable piece of armour in the game. The helmet is a cast of a pepakura file helmet and then sanded and painted before I added the lights.

There are also loads of different weapons in the game, so I chose to create a gun and an Energy sword. Both of these were created with Plastozote foam with lights added... everything looks better with lights!

TRIVIA IN *FORWARD UNTO DAWN*, MASTER CHIEF WAS PLAYED BY DANIEL CUDMORE, AKA COLOSSUS IN *X-MEN*.

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TV SPECIAL



THE HERO OF TOMORROW

SINCE ITS PREMIERE, SUPERGIRL HAS GONE FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH, AND WITH THE SECOND HALF OF SEASON ONE APPROACHING, IT WILL HOPEFULLY CONTINUE TO DO SO. PRODUCERS ALI ADLER AND ANDREW KREISBERG TALK ABOUT KARA'S FUTURE AND WHY MELISSA BENOIST IS THE PERFECT HEROINE...

WORDS EDWARD GROSS

CREATING A QUALITY TELEVISION SHOW IS THE GOAL OF ANY WRITER/PRODUCER, BUT WHEN YOU MANAGE TO CRAFT ONE THAT FILLS A VOID AND TOUCHES PEOPLE in a way that no other does – and is completely unexpected – well, that's something a little more meaningful. It's what executive producers Ali Adler and Andrew Kreisberg are experiencing with *Supergirl*, the series starring *Glee*'s Melissa Benoist in the title role.

"I'm just really proud that we get to produce such an amazing, huge spectacle, and that it's centred around this really strong female," Adler, who had previously worked with series executive producer Greg Berlanti on *No Ordinary Family*, says excitedly. "And

that men – as well as women, girls and boys – get to see this woman be strong emotionally and physically. Someone asked me in an interview, 'Who were the female role models you looked up to when you were a kid?' And I was, like, 'I don't know.' It took me way too long to answer that question. What's exciting is that I have an 11-year-old boy and an eight-year-old girl, and they both love it and we watch it together. My daughter is like, 'Oh, cool. I can be like that, too.' It feels good that we're bringing a real positive and hopeful character to our landscape."

For his part, Kreisberg, no stranger to the superhero genre as executive producer of *Arrow*, *The Flash* and *DC's Legends Of Tomorrow*, points out. "There were a lot of expectations about this show, obviously because of it being on CBS and also anything to do with that 'S' has a certain level of expectation. There were expectations because of the specific subject matter of having a female superhero, and what that meant for people and, on top of that, there were also our own expectations. When we started, we had our own concerns of 'How do we not repeat ourselves? How do we top ourselves? What are we trying to say this time around?'

"For Greg and I," he continues, "for all the shows that we've worked on together, it's probably the show that we've got the most positive feedback on, just from people in our worlds or people that we meet, or people who say, 'Oh my God, my daughter... I watch it with my daughter.' It's been kind of overwhelming, and we love it. We're so proud of Melissa."

> "IT FEELS GOOD THAT WE'RE BRINGING A REAL POSITIVE CHARACTER TO OUR LANDSCAPE"
> ALI ADLER

It's the combination of actress and scripts that have allowed *Supergirl* to stand out from other entries in the genre, resulting in a show that seems to grow stronger from episode-to-episode, allowing for genuine growth in all of the characters.

"I don't think that any of us feel that *Arrow* really hit its stride until the back half of the first season," Kreisberg says. "But with *Supergirl*, now we really like having gotten distance from those earlier episodes and being, as Captain Kirk would say, 'free and clear to navigate,' we've been able to lock in to what we like about the show, and what we think is working and really dialing it in. We feel that especially since episode five on we've had a really strong run..."

Says Adler, "We've talked about how Kara as she comes into her own and embraces who she truly is as Supergirl, that it's an arc of strength and hope that's contagious among the people that are networking with her or that she's helping. Hopefully, National City is feeling that too. I think that as we are more honest with ourselves, we grow and that's true for her and for all of us."

Particularly notable regarding the show, she feels, is there's an

The Superman connection

How the Man of Steel has influenced Supergirl



One of the less than amusing aspects of the pilot for *Supergirl* was the way that people went out of their way not to mention Kara's Kryptonian cousin by name. From that point on though, the name 'Superman' has come up numerous times, though he has yet to appear in anything more than an obscured fashion.

"We embrace the history that DC allows us to have," says Adler. "We also know that this show is through Kara's eyes and not her cousin's. So we stay away from it. At the same time, we don't have to explain it that much. We tried to address it with the Reactron episode; he does reach out to her every now and then with his IMs. By and large this is about taking the best parts of the history that Superman gives and embracing what that actual journey is from her perspective."

Part of that embracing has included taking elements from the Man of Steel's mythos. A perfect example is an adaptation of the Alan Moore story, 'For The Man Who Has Everything', in which the character Mongrel uses an alien entity that wraps itself around Superman's head, plunges him into a coma and plumbs the depth of his mind to find his ultimate fantasy, which turns out to be living a life on Krypton. So real is the fantasy that Superman resists the attempts of his friends – including Batman and Wonder Woman – to remove him from it. On this series, it's Supergirl who has that experience, and is living out her life on her home world.

"It's this amazing fantasy world where we get to go back to Krypton and see Kal-El," she offers. "We absolutely embrace what that means and how epic that is to see Krypton. It's really exciting, and it felt like a big historical moment on the stage. It's a very emotional journey of Kara getting everything she thought she ever wanted and going back to embrace the family, the city and the civilisation she lost. It was so satisfying and the script so beautiful; It just focused on itches you don't normally get to scratch."



opportunity to explore so many different aspects of Kara's past in terms of what she remembers about Krypton, her life growing up in Midvale and the history of the DEO along with its connections to her foster father.

"So [many] of the demons we fight in our own lives are our parents and our hopes for the future," Adler opines. "She's coming to realise that her parents aren't necessarily what she thought they were going to be. I think parents' disappointments often influence our present and our future, and that's probably true of her [Kryptonian] Aunt Astra as well.

"Along the way," she adds, "she's learning to trust herself more. In the beginning she not only didn't understand the depths of her powers and had to learn to hone them, she's also realising she can rely on her sister and Winn and James and even Cat Grant, who is definitely her Yoda; her spiritual guide through this journey, even unknowingly. And her growing confidence really inspires. It's her growth not only as a superhero, but as a woman, and her success in terms of work and personally that really influences everything. That includes her love life. That includes how she takes on her past and her family. That arc is regarding how each win or loss inspires a different muscle. Over the course of the season hopefully we get all those muscles working, especially the heart."

This plays into what is probably one of the strongest scenes in the series to date. In the episode 'Red Faced', while finally dealing with emotions pertaining to the life she lost on Krypton, she unleashes a powerful burst of heat vision that destroys her opponent, the android Red Tornado. It's a scene that's played silently, yet Benoist conveys nothing but visceral emotion.

"We talked about how anger is this negative quality, and Cat Grant talks about the negative aspects of anger," Adler reflects, "and what Kara really does is turn her anger into a positive in that moment to defeat the villain. Jesse Warn, who directed that, was very collaborative in finding the place where you turn that feeling upside down. It was like watching someone give birth. I really felt privileged to watch it in the way that you don't generally see people give birth. It was just extremely private, that moment, and Melissa shared it with all the crew. It was a powerful thing to witness.



As the show has progressed, so too have Kara's powers.



It looks like Supergirl will continue to work with Alex and the DEO.

"And the way it ended up playing out, that was a beautiful choice from our editorial and our director," she says. "It was for us who were there in this weird ravine, and it wasn't just one take. Melissa would have to conjure that level of emotion many times and she did it with equal commitment every time. She gave everything to that moment."

Which firmly leads to the subject of Melissa Benoist, who stands at the core of an extremely strong cast and whose impact on the series has been stronger than even the actress herself might have ever suspected.

"With Melissa," emphasises Adler, "we have such a wide range of emotions available to us. I think that if this were a Superman show, for example, his square jaw would oftentimes be the end of a scene. With Melissa we get to explore all the emotional tributaries with her. Not that men don't have those feelings, but there's more allowance for them here. I think the rest of our cast is just brilliant and we really get to explore not just her physical powers, but her emotional powers."

Having worked with Benoist a little on *Glee*, Adler was well aware of how "positive a soul" she is, and someone who contributes as much as anyone on staff. "It's such a marathon producing this show; there's so much hard work from the writers and then from the crew and it doesn't stop there. The baton is passed on to visual effects and post. It's just such an intensive process that when you look at number one on the call sheet, Melissa Benoist, she really is our shepherd. She's our inspiration and has, for much of this process, been our muse. At 3am you'll look over and she's got this big smile on her face and is singing a song or doing a little tap dance. It really makes the crew work harder and all of us just go, like, 'Wow, she's doing all of that.' I am not just using hyperbole when I say that she *is* Supergirl."

Supergirl will return to Sky1 in March.







Too much DCU?

Andrew Kreisberg on whether there can be too much of a good thing

As has been the case with *Arrow* and, especially, *The Flash*, *Supergirl* seems to be quickly mining the DC Universe, raising the question of whether it's dangerous in terms of a mainstream audience in adding too many comic-book elements too quickly. Executive producer Andrew Kreisberg doesn't agree.

"Just like on *Arrow* when we added Roy, he didn't become Arsenal until Season Three," he says, "even though he was introduced halfway through Season One. So just because somebody joins the show, it doesn't mean that they're going to instantaneously become their comic book character. It's just a question of how you lay that stuff out. As much as [some people] are very versed in the comics, not everyone out there is. For some people, this is really their entry into the comic-book world.

"They could be watching a show like *The Flash*," Kreisberg elaborates, "and have no idea that Wally West becomes The Flash. There are a subset of people who could be like, 'Oh my God, you guys are too quick and you've already got Wally West.' There are other people just watching, going, 'Oh, those are new characters,' in the same way that every show introduces new people as they move forward."



From the desk of Cat Grant

Kal-El's Clark Kent disguise was kind of pathetic, but Kara Zor-El's one is even worse. How are people continuing not to notice their secret identities?

©David Cousens

BREAK THE CHAINS
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TV SPECIAL

LEGENDS IN THE MAKING







TV'S MOST UNLIKELY TEAM-UP WILL BECOME THE WORLD'S GREATEST HEROES IN DC'S LEGENDS OF TOMORROW. SHOWRUNNER PHIL KLEMMER AND STARS ARTHUR DARVILL AND CASPER CRUMP TALK TIME TRAVEL AND REDEMPTION IN THE AMAZING ARROW/FLASH SPINOFF...

WORDS **EDWARD GROSS**

"IF IT WERE SMOOTH SAILING, IT WOULD PROBABLY MEAN THAT OUR SHOW SUCKS. I'LL JUST SAY THAT OUR SHOW DOES NOT SUCK." SUCH IS THE ASSURANCE OF PHIL KLEMMER, executive producer and showrunner of *DC's Legends Of Tomorrow*, which promises to be the wildest of all of the series inspired by the DCU as it brings together heroes and villains – gathered by time traveller Rip Hunter (Arthur Darvill) – in adventures through the years as they attempt to stop the immortal Vandal Savage (Casper Crump) from subjugating the world in the future.

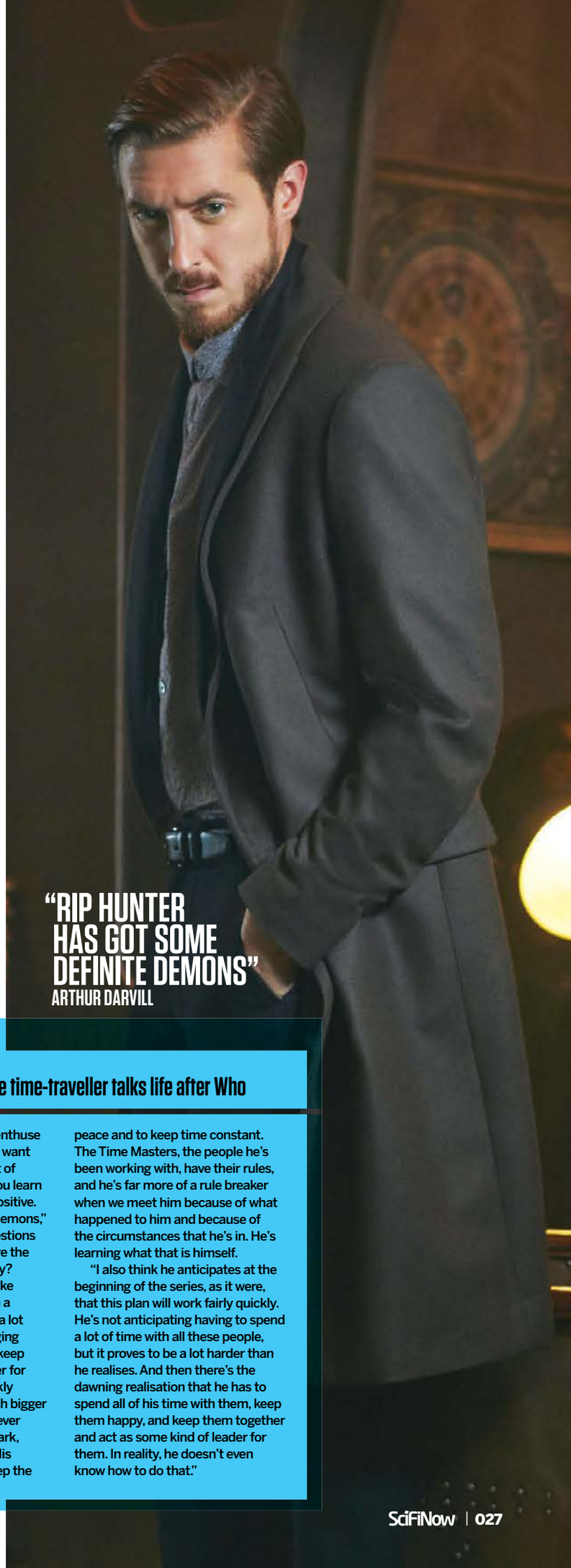
Right from the show's first trailer, it was obvious that this was a series that would have scope far beyond any other entry on the small screen, a scope that is not there just for the promos to lure an audience in.

"That's the thing," Klemmer laughs, "there are no smoke and mirrors. The material that we've been putting out isn't cold. It's not like we're just shaving the cream off the top and we're going to serve everybody the watered-down product in the series itself. I feel like all the trailers do is compress the material. You realise that those are just beats out of episodes, each 42 minutes long and multiplied by 16. When we got the first two episodes back and saw that they worked, you can feel pride, but then you have to kiss the ground and thank the fates. It's in somebody else's hands when you're doing something this big with an idea that's so outlandish and a cast that's so varied, that a production that ambitious would all add up to something coherent is incredible. Yet despite all the madness, it's still something that works on a human scale. You're like, 'Oh my God, these are people. This is a compelling story that just happens to be a crazy superhero spectacle.'"

It sounds akin to *Avengers Assemble* in that it too was a large-scale adventure that never really lost sight of the people at its core. And in the same way that Iron Man, Captain America, Thor and the rest were established in previous movies, the majority of *Legends*' cast appeared in episodes of *Arrow* and *The Flash*. In the case of the former, characters include the Atom (Brandon Routh) and White Canary (Caity Lotz), while the latter spawned Martin Stein (Victor Garber), Jefferson Jackson (Franz Drameh), Hawkgirl (Ciara Renée), Heat Wave (Dominic Purcell), Captain Cold (Wentworth Miller) and Hawkman (Falk Hentschel), with Rip Hunter and Vandal Savage coming from a crossover between both series.

"One of our strengths," Klemmer notes, "is that the majority of our people had previewed themselves on the other shows, so they came into this one with a ton of confidence that allowed them to really put themselves into these outlandish situations. They didn't have to wonder if this could be pulled off. That was the Dumbo's feather for me and a lot of people: knowing it would fly because it's flown before. And I have to say, the most fun is just writing scenes with all of our characters bickering and bitching at each other. And the fact that we get to spend so much time with 'villains'. I defy anybody that watches the season to not come away feeling like your heart has been a little bit broken by guys like Mick Rory [Heat Wave] or Leonard Snart [Captain Cold]. You start to realise the pathology behind being a bad guy. They can be the most compelling characters, because they're crooked for a reason. They're looking for some sort of way to redeeming themselves.

"Seeing the influence the good guys have on the bad guys and the bad guys on the good, it's almost like a political argument, forcing the Democrats and Republicans to actually talk to each other," he adds. "If you force them into a spaceship together, it sort of humanises the other side of the argument. Part of the joy of the show is that there's so many permutations of characters, that even halfway through the season we still find ourselves telling stories where you realise, 'Oh man, these three people have never actually been in this sort of situation, just the three of them.' You don't have to come up with fake tensions or fake conflict, because it's all sort of baked in. The dramatic tension just bubbles out in a very natural way." ⇨



"RIP HUNTER HAS GOT SOME DEFINITE DEMONS"
ARTHUR DARVILL

ARTHUR DARVILL ON RIP HUNTER The time-traveller talks life after Who

Best known as Rory Williams in *Doctor Who*, Arthur Darvill seems genuinely excited and challenged to portray Rip Hunter, a Time Master and de facto leader of the Legends of Tomorrow.

"Rip is such a complicated character, unlike anything I've ever had to explore before," he shares. "The idea of getting into this guy's brain and life was really exciting for me. He's very front-footed, he's got a lot of secrets, and he makes decisions. A lot of the parts that I've played are slightly on the back foot; reactionary characters. This was a real challenge for me, as I've gained in confidence as an actor and put that to the test.

"What's interesting is that all of that stuff in the trailers is Rip making big speeches and trying to enthuse a group of people who don't want to be enthused. There's a lot of positivity in him, but soon you learn that he's not actually that positive.

"He's got some definite demons," adds Darvill. "One of my questions when I started was, 'What are the things that trigger his energy? What are the things that make him angry?' He's come from a place in the future. He's got a lot of knowledge that he's bringing with him, and he's trying to keep this group of people together for a common goal. It very quickly unravels and become a much bigger task for him than I think he ever anticipated. You see a real dark, dark future that he's from. His role in that future was to keep the peace and to keep time constant. The Time Masters, the people he's been working with, have their rules, and he's far more of a rule breaker when we meet him because of what happened to him and because of the circumstances that he's in. He's learning what that is himself.

"I also think he anticipates at the beginning of the series, as it were, that this plan will work fairly quickly. He's not anticipating having to spend a lot of time with all these people, but it proves to be a lot harder than he realises. And then there's the dawning realisation that he has to spend all of his time with them, keep them happy, and keep them together and act as some kind of leader for them. In reality, he doesn't even know how to do that."



MUST-SEE TV
Legends Of Tomorrow

Klemmer has often described *Legends Of Tomorrow* as the "off the wall" entry in the DC primetime sweepstakes in comparison to *The Flash* and *Arrow*.

"YOU DON'T HAVE TO COME UP WITH CONFLICT; IT'S ALL SORT OF BAKED IN"
PHIL KLEMMER

"It's hard to explain," he offers, before attempting to do so anyway. "There is an absurdity to it and a wry sense of humour. I feel like when you're dealing with things that are huge, awful and terrible, at least for me my response is to sort of seek solace in humour. That, therefore, is what our characters do. They are dealing with the highest of stakes. Either you can let the gravity of that sink in, and then it would become a really sort of depressing show where everything has a heaviness to it, or you can respond to it with gallows humour. For me, that's how you make sense out of things that are unthinkable. The show is really funny, because it has to be to leaven the stakes of what they're doing."

Those stakes, of course, are all about saving humanity and stopping Vandal Savage in different eras. This naturally leads to time travel in Hunter's vessel, the Waverider, which perfectly taps into Klemmer's growing fascination with different eras from when he was producing the TV series *Forever*.

"That was another immortal fellow, though not as sinister as Vandal Savage," he says, "but I really got a taste for those flashbacks and the fact on this show we get to travel in time and space and geography. As a history buff, you just think of every place you would want to be in history and you can find a good reason to put Vandal Savage there. That's how he made his mark on the planet. He's been sort of hiding in the shadows and manipulating the course of history by whispering in powerful men's ears. You can go to these incredible flashpoints where the world could go either way. That really appeals to the history geek in me."

At the same time, audiences will get to see the consequences of what the team itself has done to history in their efforts to stop Savage.



Caity Lotz changes her stripes to become White Canary.



It's fair to say that the *Legends Of Tomorrow* team are an unlikely group of heroes.



CASPER CRUMP ON VANDAL SAVAGE What's driving the eons-old adversary?

"The thing about Vandal Savage as a villain," proposes Danish actor Casper Crump of the 6,000-year-old immortal he plays on *Legends Of Tomorrow*, "is he's a bit different from other villains who want something. They usually want a nuclear weapon or a lot of money, but Vandal, in my opinion, sometimes just wants to teach humanity a lesson. If he sees a great challenge, he'll just be up for it. If nothing happens for a time, he'll just kick back for 30 years, chill out and not do anything.

"His thing, of course, is world domination. That's just the way it goes when you have all the time in the world, I guess. He's real. He's not laughing, 'I want a lot of money, I want all the weapons in the world,' even though that's what he ends up getting. On the way there, he's really looking for a challenge. He wants to teach humanity, he want to put things in perspective. This might be a little controversial, but he's inspiring as well. I was looking at the news, and see him as a modern politician sometimes. He really thinks he's doing all the things right for the people, and of course he's not. But then suddenly all of these people are coming towards him, and he doesn't understand it at all. That's how I view him."





"Oftentimes when you're trying to fix things, you can make them grossly worse," muses Klemmer. "In early episodes we kind of learn that our team is their own worst enemy, because of selfish motives, infighting and just plain sloppiness. Rip Hunter was a Time Master who handled things like a surgeon; he was able to insert himself into the timeline and make discreet changes. People like Leonard Snart and Mick Rory are not discreet fellows. If you look at *Back To The Future* and *The Butterfly Effect* when you keep your parents from meeting at the Enchantment Under the Sea Dance. All of a sudden you're disappearing from a polaroid. On our show, we make mistakes that are massive and can compromise the future of the world. We're are own worst enemies."

Just because the Waverider is zipping through time, it doesn't mean it can't visit some familiar terrain. Klemmer enthuses, "Part of the fun of the show is the possibility to stop in the worlds of either *The Flash* universe or the *Arrow* universe, and see the 'Ghost of Christmas Present' or 'Christmas Future' stories. For our team to realise what the world looks like without them, or what the world looks like because of either their success or failure as Legends."

Legends Of Tomorrow is currently airing in the US, and is coming soon to Sky1.

KNOW YOUR LEGENDS

Vandal Savage's journal notes on the new pretenders...



ATOM
Real name: Ray Palmer
Strengths: Has a versatile tech suit
Weaknesses: Is crap at using it
Evaluation: All the power is worthless if you lack the means to wield it. If he crosses my path than he'll learn the hard way: the way of pain.



WHITE CANARY
Real name: Sara Lance
Strengths: Formidable martial artist
Weaknesses: Has been killed once. Can happen again
Evaluation: The sole warrior of this sorry bunch, but even she is nothing before my power.



CAPTAIN COLD
Real name: Leonard Snart
Strengths: Powerful gun and ruthless
Weaknesses: Arrogant, volatile and not a team player
Evaluation: Clearly there aren't enough heroes to face me. With the right offer, I will be able to turn him.



HEAT WAVE
Real name: Mick Rory
Strengths: See Captain Cold
Weaknesses: See Captain Cold
Evaluation: He thinks that just because he has a powerful weapon that he stands a chance against me. He will learn the error of his ways.



FIRESTORM
Real names: Martin Stein and Jefferson Jackson
Strengths: Brains and brawn
Weaknesses: Working as a team
Evaluation: Powerful they are, but it will take more than power to destroy that which cannot be destroyed.



HAWKMAN
Real name: Carter Hall
Strengths: Hard to catch, persistent
Weakness: Has never beaten me
Evaluation: Never knows when to quit. Didn't his previous 200 or so deaths teach him that resistance is futile? He got lucky once, but he won't again.



HAWKGIRL
Real name: Kendra Saunders
Strengths: Again, hard to catch
Weaknesses: Fatally inexperienced
Evaluation: This one is different to her previous incarnations: they accepted their fate, while she tries to escape it. No matter: everyone must fall.



RIP HUNTER
Real name: See above
Strengths: Can travel through time
Weaknesses: Needs others to do his dirty work for him
Evaluation: I have to confess, I know not what his motives are. I sense this one is hiding something.



















TV SPECIAL

DARHK MAGIC



ARROW HAS CHANGED BEYOND RECOGNITION SINCE IT BEGAN. WITH THE RETURNING SEASON 4 VENTURING FURTHER INTO MAGICAL TERRITORY, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER WENDY MERICLE TELLS US HOW IT WILL CONTINUE TO EVOLVE...

WORDS **EDWARD GROSS**

ARROW HAS GONE THROUGH AN EVOLUTION ITS CREATORS MAY NEVER HAVE IMAGINED WHEN THINGS KICKED OFF FOUR YEARS AGO. BACK THEN, THE SERIES WAS DEEPLY rooted in reality. Since then we've seen the super speed of Barry Allen; Ra's al Ghul and his Lazarus Pit; the all-powerful Damien Darhk; the magic of John Constantine; the seemingly immortal Vandal Savage, and the promise of so much more from the DC universe. Times are changing.

"It's a tricky balance," admits executive producer and co-showrunner Wendy Mericle. "Obviously, with the introduction of The Flash we had to change things. Prior to that, the show had a procedural element. Some of the stories were very straightforward crime stories with a gritty feel we all blessedly on staff really embraced and loved.

"When *The Flash* came around," she elaborates, "we had to at least entertain the notion that this is a universe where you could have superpowers and you could have meta-humans; it did change the complexion of what was possible. I think we handled it in a couple of ways. One of which, in a very obvious way, we had the characters comment on it. We have Dig and Felicity both offer commentary, in what we hope is a very organic way of saying, 'Wow, I didn't even know this was possible. How is John Constantine putting Sara's soul back in her body? How are these things possible?' Really speaking to Oliver's background in flashbacks, and him being able to say, 'Well, I've seen and done things that you never imagined.' That's one way, I think. If the characters comment on it, it keeps it grounded."



Thea's Lazarus Pit immersion has left her with unknown powers.



With Felicity in danger, the gloves are off for Oliver.

> "OLIVER'S GOING TO HAVE TO EMBRACE MAGIC TO DEFEAT DAMIEN"
> WENDY MERICLE

The other means of doing so has been to make sure that there is a real-world truth to the relationships between those characters that's maintained, no matter how fantastical story elements become. One such example was Matt Ryan resurrecting the Constantine role from his own short-lived series.

"We were really fortunate with that," Mericle enthuses. "We had an organic reason to bring him into the story. If we're going to bring in someone with those types of powers, there's a very good reason for it. In this case it was to restore Sara and launch her into the different universe of *Legends*. We were really lucky that Matt and Stephen Amell just had an organic chemistry onscreen. We felt very lucky to get him; their performances were outstanding. Without being coy, I can tell you we would always love to have Matt back. Right now there are no plans to, it was a one-off thing, but that doesn't mean it would never happen in the future."

The main question facing Oliver Queen (Stephen Amell) for the remainder of the year is how he is going to maintain his extended family in the face of Damien Darhk (Neal McDonough), with the mid-season finale seeing Oliver outing the supervillain on TV, resulting in a revenge attack that leaves Felicity (Emily Bett Rickards) in a critical condition.

"This will bring us into another theme that we've started to explore," reveals Mericle, "which is magic. Oliver has always had a very tenuous and, I would say, cautious relationship with magic. Going forward, he's going to have to maybe change his mind or embrace certain elements if he's going to actually take on and defeat Damien. Oliver recognises that magic exists in this world, and it's something he believes in. Damien is the perfect, darkest example of that. It's not a positive force, and it's not something he wants to embrace or deal with. That's why Constantine, in a way, was perfect, because he could deal with it. He's the one who goes to Hell and deals with the demons and all of that. That's not Oliver. He just may not always have a choice."

Arrow: Season Four will return to Sky1 later this year.

Vixen it up

The heroine is physically heading to our TV screens

The voice of Vixen, Megalyn Echikunwoke, will be bringing her animated character of the superheroine Vixen to life on the show, which is fair considering that both Amell and Grant Gustin have voiced, respectively, Green Arrow and The Flash in the *Vixen* animated online series.

"One of the things I can say is that she's coming into our universe for a very specific reason," notes Mericle. "She's needed. We're just really excited. We feel very lucky that we were able to get Megalyn."

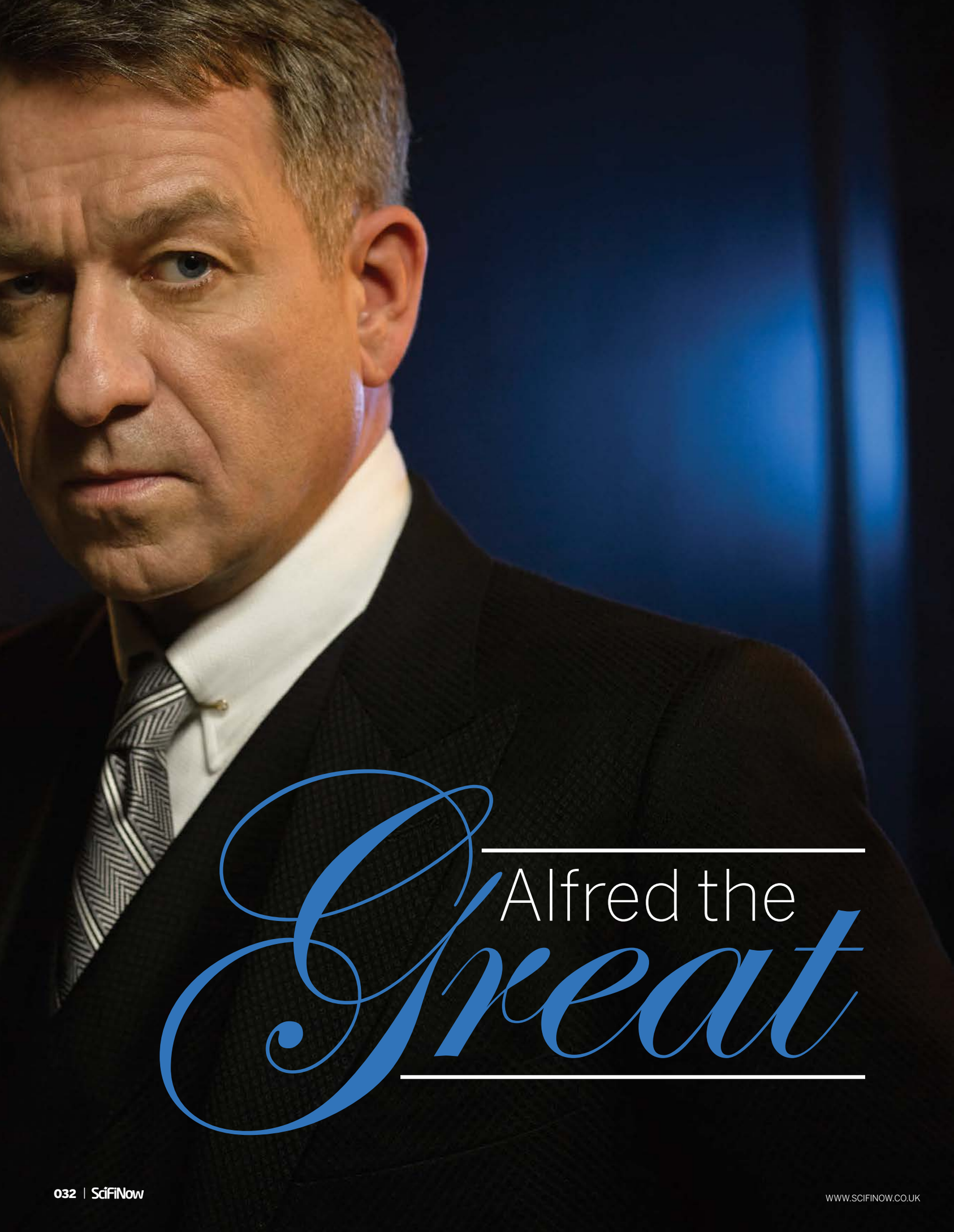
It's a continuity that must have been imagined early on since it's seldom that producers have to consider how a voice actor is going to look on film, so she would likely have been a candidate for the live-action Vixen from the start.

"I wasn't actually involved in that casting decision, but what I can say is that no matter what role we're casting, when it's somebody of that stature and magnitude within the DC Universe, it behooves you have an eye towards that because, A, you want the continuity if you can get it; and, B, it just makes a lot more sense."









Alfred the Great

WITH VILLAINS FALLING OUT OF ARKHAM LEFT, RIGHT AND CENTRE, WE TALK TO ACTOR SEAN PERTWEE ABOUT HOW ALFRED PENNYWORTH IS GOING TO CLEAR UP THE MESS IN GOTHAM SEASON TWO...

WORDS **POPPY-JAY PALMER**



IT'S REALLY HITTING THE FAN IN GOTHAM FOR SEASON TWO. AS IF THERE WEREN'T enough villains running around already, now there are hordes of them busting their way out of Arkham Asylum. Batman would be able to handle them no problem, but seeing as he's still a 12-year-old kid (David Mazouz) in the *Gotham* universe, he's going to need some help containing them. That's where Bruce Wayne's butler/guardian/bodyguard Alfred Pennyworth comes in. We spoke to actor Sean Pertwee about what's in store for Alfred, and the fate of the city...

NOW BRUCE IS EDGING CLOSER TOWARDS BECOMING BATMAN, DOES THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HIM AND ALFRED CHANGE?

It changes like in any sort of parental way. I think the thing is that they knocked heads. They were both as damaged as each other, which they didn't realise in Season One, and in Season Two Bruce starts to become a man. There's an understanding there. You wouldn't say it's a dysfunctional relationship. because that strikes a chord of something that doesn't work, and it does work. It's just not the norm. You definitely see him growing as a man, and then Alfred growing as a parental figure as well as a teacher. He could very easily go to the dark side. He could have turned into a villain in the last season if he was under the instruction of Reggie (David O'Hara).

DOES THE FACT THAT THE SEASON'S SUBTITLE IS 'RISE OF THE VILLAINS' MEAN YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BE IN IT AS MUCH, OR WILL YOU BE FIGHTING BACK AGAINST THEM?

Funnily enough, especially the first four episodes, I'm in it a great deal. Something that we're really pleased about is that the story arcs are much deeper. They'll go over four or five episodes sometimes. If not, there will be a thread throughout. So you get a chance to really understand the characters. [We shoot *Gotham*] like a film. We've been given the opportunity to discover more about these characters over 22 hours of television. It's like making 22 movies. Some episodes we're not in so much, and some we are. But when you are in them, you really sort of see how these characters change, and how their relationships change. That's what the fans are really warming to in the States. The response to the second season has been phenomenal.

DO YOU PREFER TELLING STORIES OVER THE COURSE OF MORE EPISODES AS OPPOSED TO HAVING A 'CASE OF THE WEEK'?

Absolutely! It's something we felt very strongly about in Season One. I think the thing was that we were slightly hoisted by our own petard in Season One. It's not that we're not proud of it or anything, but there were a lot more standalone episodes. It wasn't necessarily anybody's fault, we were lucky to get six more episodes from 16 to 22 halfway through the season, so of course there were some that felt left out on their own slightly. Nowadays they have a much more solid heartbeat pentameter. We know where we're going, and there's a very definite split. The first 11 episodes have got a very strong storyline concerning this character called Galavan [played by James Frain], who is responsible for creating mayhem, and then the second half ties the whole thing up and it concentrates on Indian Hill, which is the development of the super-supervillains. We're very excited.

DO WE GET TO SEE MORE OF ALFRED'S BACK STORY?

It's funny, I talked to Bruno Heller about that, and he was quite right. He said you get tied up with everything when you see back stories, so you always learn more about him going forward. You learn more about Alfred in situations later on. That's why Bruno is so clever. Alfred will find himself in these situations... we just filmed one, for example, where you suddenly realise and go, 'Oh my god! I never knew that character was capable of doing that! Why would he do it?' And then you understand why, because he was SAS, and you understand what kind of background he must have had, and his sensibilities and his feelings about honour and trust and all these things. You find out and learn about his history going forward, which I think is a very clever way of doing it.

BEING EX-ARMY, ALFRED IS A BIT OF A BRAWLER. PARTICULARLY IN THIS SEASON, DID YOU GET TO DO YOUR OWN STUNTS?

We have an amazing stunt team, but I've done quite a lot of that, and I love doing it... I don't bounce like I used to, so we shot two big fight sequences where you see Alfred unleashed again, and you see what he's capable of. It's been a lot of fun to do and I'm still lucky enough to be allowed to do it! Our stunt team is brilliant. They let me do it, and they let me fight with the stunt guys, and I'm very proud of that element of it. I've always loved doing that physical element, but I'm not as sprightly as I used to be. I bruise easily, let's put it that way.

IS IT NICE TO GET HOME AND SEE *GOTHAM* AIRING IN THE UK?

It's one of the greatest things. I think the fact that it's been aired on Netflix, and of course with the support of Channel 5, it's a lovely thing for me to come home to and – this sounds narcissistic – for people to be proud and be happy for you. It's a really humbling experience. I live in Soho, and it's nice to have people come up who love the show and are pleased for me, to be lucky enough to be 51 and playing such a legendary character.

DO YOU GET RECOGNISED FOR *GOTHAM* A LOT HERE?

Yes! A lot here! It's funny, I've got a teenage son called Alfred, and I get 'props', as they say, from his friends who all watch it. It's interesting taking Freddie to meet Cory [Michael Smith, who plays future Riddler Edward Nygma] and Robin [Lord Taylor, aka Oswald 'Penguin' Cobblepot], and to actually see him slightly wig out and go, 'Oh my god!' And then I go, 'So you *do* watch it!' I did the same thing when my dad was in *Doctor Who*, so what can I say?

Gotham Season Two is currently airing on Mondays on Channel 5.



Alfred has had to keep an increasingly watchful eye on the young Bruce Wayne (David Mazouz).



TV SPECIAL

FLASH FORWARD

THE REALITY-BENDING ANTICS OF SEASON TWO WILL CONTINUE, WITH EARTH-2 UNDER THE MICROSCOPE. PRODUCER ANDREW KREISBERG TELLS US HOW THE FLASH WILL GET MORE AND MORE STRANGE...

WORDS **EDWARD GROSS**



Hopefully we'll discover exactly who it is under Zoom's mask.



It looks like the Barry/Iris romance is on hold – at least for now.

AS SEASON TWO OF THE FLASH CONTINUES TO UNFOLD, IT'S DELVING INTO DARKER AND MORE FRIGHTENING TERRITORY THAN BEFORE AS IT HAS PROGRESSIVELY fleshed out the characters while showcasing the impact Zoom – an enemy from Earth-2 – is having on them.

"It wasn't a conscious decision. This is just something we noticed happening," reflects executive producer Andrew Kreisberg. "Zoom is a much scarier villain in some ways than the Reverse Flash was, and there's still a lot more darker moments this year. At the same time, there have been a lot more out-and-out laughs; the show is just funnier, so the darkness and the humour have balanced each other, so it still feels like *The Flash*. Some of that's from the writing, and some of that's in the improv of the actors, who are so incredibly talented."

Much of the shifting in tone has also had to do with the fact that both the characters and the actors playing them are maturing, bringing greater weight to the series. "We feel like the characters are no longer making the simpler decisions that they made in the first year," says Kreisberg. "They're all recognising that things aren't so black and white. I'm not comparing ourselves to the quality of *The Empire Strikes Back*, but in the same way that *Star Wars* was a little simpler and a little more black and white, in *Empire* things got a little deeper, richer and more complicated."

That's certainly been the case with actor Tom Cavanagh, who brought the Earth-2 Harrison Wells into the show and has painted a version of the character markedly different from the one he played in year one.

"Last year you had Wells, who was this master chess player, manipulating and moving the characters around for his own purposes, and he didn't really care who got hurt," Kreisberg says. "For us, it's been so interesting to have this same character who, in some ways, we're putting in the worst situations possible. Where it's like, 'What would any of us not do to save our child?' We were intrigued by the idea that last year you really liked Wells, but you hated everything that he was doing. This year, in some ways you don't like Wells, but you completely understand why he's doing what he's doing. Wells is a cracked-mirror version of the original, while infusing it with so much heart."

Another 'mirror image' is the one between Barry Allen and actor Grant Gustin. Both went through a lot in Season One as they came to grips with the changes in their lives – Barry with being a superhero, Gustin with leading a hit TV series – and both have found, things easier to handle in year two.

"Now, as we're going through the second season, Grant's been doing this for a while and, not to say some of the sheen is off, but now he's sort of used to the excitement and used to everything that's happening," Kreisberg says. "As a result, it becomes a different thing, and that's sort of what's happening to Barry too. Barry's gotten used to being The Flash, and he's also gotten used to some of the more outrageous things that can happen in their lives, so not every situation is being met with a wide-eyed Barry saying, 'Are you trying to tell me that X is happening?' There really isn't anything they can face that they're shocked by anymore.

"Barry went through so much. He time travelled, he freed his dad, he watched his mother die, he saw his mentor betray him, he's seen people come back to life, he's seen people die, he's seen people die for him. It's a lot. That's having an impact on him, and as always, what's amazing about Barry Allen is that he never lets light diminish, no matter how much darkness he's in. He's known loss and pain, but he's not letting that prevent him from trusting other people, and reaching out and letting a new love into his life. It's such a great way to live... we all wish we were Barry Allen. I certainly wish I was."

The main drive of the season was set up in the first episode of the year with Wells' posthumous message to Barry that even if Barry should beat him, he'll never experience true happiness in his life.

"The guy is dead and erased from existence," Kreisberg states, "but there's this nagging, lingering thing inside of him that he has unfinished business, which is constantly brought up by the fact that he's working with a doppelgänger of that man. Then there's Zoom, who's out there stalking him like this great white whale. What is it inside him that he needs to do to be happy? Is it defeating Zoom? Is it wherever things end up with this new Wells? That's the drive for him over the course of the back half of the season."

The Flash Season Two will return to Sky1 later in 2016.









WORLDS APART

The key differences between Earths 1 and 2



A WHOLE NEW ARROW

A TV report reveals that Oliver Queen died instead of his father, leaving his dad to take the Green Arrow mantle. His career was short-lived, as he was quickly unmasked.



LINDA PARK

Earth-1 Linda Park works as a sports journalist, but on Earth-2 she masquerades as the villainous Dr Light.



GORILLA CITY

On Earth-2, Grodd wasn't the only gorilla who was experimented on. There were enough of them to form their own society. That'll end well...

DC's TV Empire

Mapping the relationships between the citizens of the CW-verse…



Zoom

Rip Hunter

Captain Cold

Grodd

Caitlin Snow

Ronnie Raymond †?

Heat Wave

Patty Spivot

Cisco Ramon[1]

Martin Stein

Jefferson Jackson

Harrison Wells (Earth-2)

Barry Allen

Hawkman[2]

Jay Garrick

Joe West

Eobard Thawne †

Henry Allen

Iris West

Vandal Savage[4]

Nora Allen †

Wally West

Alex Davis

Linda Park

Eddie Thawne †?

Sebastian Blood †

Andy Diggle

Isabel Rochev †

Key

Team Flash · Team Arrow · Suicide Squad · †? Might be dead

League Of Assassins · Legends Of Tomorrow · → Killed · † Dead

Metahuman — Related — Romantically linked

1 Killed by Eobard, but Flash went back and changed time

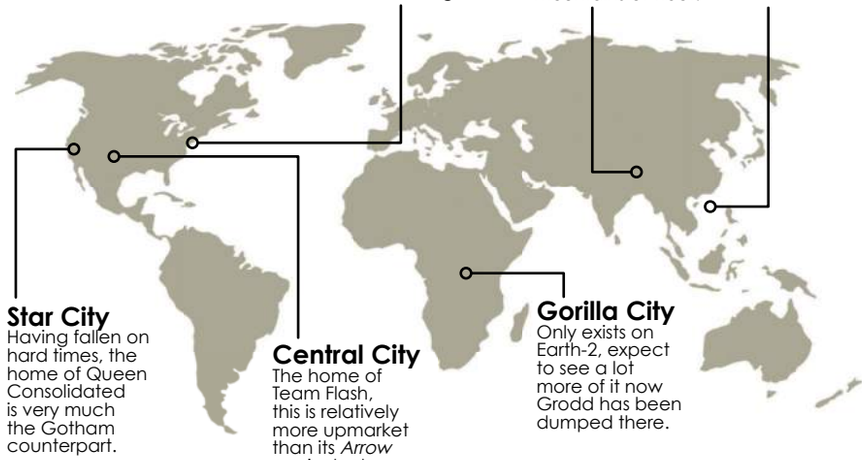
2 Both have died and been reincarnated numerous times

3 Resurrected - member of Legends, Team Arrow & the League

4 Killed by Flash and Arrow, but brought back by Merlyn

X Marks the spot

Where in the world are Arrow & The Flash's fictional locations?



Bludhaven
Not seen yet, but it's frequently mentioned in a disparaging tone, so it can't be all that great.

Nanda Parbat
Home to the League of Assassins, hidden away in the mountains of Tibet.

Lian Xu
Where Oliver Queen spent his formative years. Abandon all hope ye who enter here.

Star City
Having fallen on hard times, the home of Queen Consolidated is very much the Gotham counterpart.

Central City
The home of Team Flash, this is relatively more upmarket than its *Arrow* equivalent.

Gorilla City
Only exists on Earth-2, expect to see a lot more of it now Grodd has been dumped there.

John Constantine

Sin

Curtis Holt

Quentin Lance

Donna Smoak

Sara Lance[3]

Edward Fyers †

Hawkgirl[2]

Ra's Al Ghul †

Chase †

Nyssa Al Ghul

Ray Palmer

Laurel Lance

Damien Darhk

Maseo Yamashiro †

Roy Harper

Oliver Queen

Tatsu Yamashiro

Bill Wintergreen †

Thea Queen

Felicity Smoak

Malcolm Merlyn

Akio Yamashiro †

Tommy Merlyn †

John Diggle

Shado †

Amanda Waller

Slade Wilson

Moira Queen †

Deadshot †?

Cupid

Yao Fei †

Layla Michaels

Walter Steele

Bronze Tiger

Anthony Ivo †

Robert Queen †

Shrapnel †

Natural Born Killers

Ranking the evilness of the main villains

Malcolm Merlyn
Evil trigger: Hearing his wife murdered
Worst atrocities: Levelling the Glades; manipulating Thea into killing Sara
Current status: Head of the League of Assassins
Evilness rating: 8/10

Slade Wilson
Evil trigger: Seeing Shado murdered, and being warped by Mirakuru
Worst atrocities: Unleashing Mirakuru soldiers on Star City; killing Moira
Current status: Imprisoned on Lian Yu
Evilness Rating: 7/10

Ra's Al Ghul
Evil Trigger: Seeing his wife murdered
Worst atrocities: Trying to wipe out Star City
Current Status: Deceased
Evilness Rating: 6/10

Damien Darhk
Evil Trigger: Unknown
Worst Atrocities: Holding Star City to ransom; shooting Felicity
Current Status: Leader of HIVE
Evilness Rating: 10/10

Eobard Thawne
Evil Trigger: Rivalry with Flash
Worst Atrocity: Murdering Nora Allen
Current Status: Erased From Timeline
Evilness Rating: 8/10

Zoom
Evil Trigger: Unknown
Worst Atrocity: Numerous
Current Status: At large
Evilness Rating: 9/10



BEYOND THE WALL



AS THE DIVERGENT SERIES INCHES TOWARDS ITS CLIMAX WITH ALLEGIANT, SHAILENE WOODLEY AND THEO JAMES TALK ABOUT WHAT'S NEXT FOR TRIS AND FOUR...

WORDS **POPPY-JAY PALMER** INTERVIEWS **JOANNA OZDOBINSKA**

THE DIVERGENT SERIES HAS FINALLY HIT THE SLOG, THE TRICKY BIT NEAR THE END OF THE STORY WHERE IT'S ALMOST FINISHED, BUT NOT QUITE. THE SLOG IS becoming increasingly more common in YA franchises. Harry Potter's camping trip in *Deathly Hallows: Part One* was met with mixed opinions from fans, and Katniss Everdeen's stint in the dank, underground District 13 for *Mockingjay: Part One* left a lot of viewers desperately wanting something exciting to happen.

Technically, *Allegiant* is the third film in a series of four, as opposed to the first part of the last film, but it's still based on the final book of Veronica Roth's hit *Divergent* series. But how essential was it that the final book be split into two parts? Is this a case of needing more time to tell a rich, detailed story, or one of wanting to get those sweet extra ticket sales? Shailene Woodley, who plays teen protagonist Tris Prior in the series, appears to be of two minds.

"I thought that we should just make one big movie based on the last book, because the book has really enough content for one film," she admits. "Because they decided to split it into two films, now we have the book plus the artistic license of the writers, the director and the creatives involved to embellish the story and to make it into two proper films, which I don't think that there is a right or wrong decision; there are just different decisions."

Theo James, who plays Four, is similarly pragmatic. "You've got one book turned into two films, which is inevitably a challenge. It's been done quite a bit, and can work very well. The challenge comes from trying to create and find two true and good full narrative arcs from only one story. Inevitably, some license has to be taken with the story to make it as rich as possible, so that is problematic. But it's nice, because we're in different territory."

Unlike a lot of first-parters, *Allegiant* can't really be described as the calm before the storm. It's edging towards the climax, but kicking and screaming all the way there. "In this film they go beyond the wall. She leaves Chicago behind," Woodley tells us. "I think that she's choosing consciously to enter a new chapter in her life where she's obviously never going to forget or stop grieving the loss of her parents and her family. But she's moving forward with their legacy attached to her own."

James further elaborates: "It's the same world you're used to: the same characters, the same visual dynamic, and then they go outside of the wall – it's a quite complex action sequence – and they discover what is out there, which initially they think is nothingness, but they realise that there's a whole complex hierarchy they didn't know about. They quickly realise the complexities of it, and they think it's great, but later on in the film they find out it could be more clandestine than they had first thought."

As the series speeds towards its end, more new faces are showing up to lend star power. Jeff Daniels is the most notable new inclusion as David, the leader of the transparently sinister-sounding Bureau of Genetic Welfare, with Bill Skarsgård (*Hemlock Grove*) portraying scientist Matthew. With the likes of Miles Teller, Naomi Watts, Zoë Kravitz, Octavia Spencer, Ray Stevenson and Keiynan Lonsdale all returning, you have a seriously impressive-looking ensemble.

As we inch towards the end, we'll also see some of the themes from the first half of the series return. But instead of battling her fears in artificial fearscapes, Tris will be coming face to face with them in the flesh. "I don't think that living in fear makes any sense, but I also recognise that fear is inevitable, and it's not something you're ever going to get rid of," says Woodley. "I think fear provides a platform for you to be proud of yourself. It's important to recognise self-pride so that you can recognise self-love, but I think using fear as a challenge and an opportunity to grow is a great way to live your life feeling empowered.

"Every single day there are fears, whether you have a conversation with someone that you don't know and you don't know how they're going to react. Maybe it's something that you said and you're not really proud of, or maybe you're afraid that you're going to be late to a meeting, or you're afraid that you're going to say a wrong thing and someone is going to publish something that you don't want others to know! Fears are constantly around." ⇨



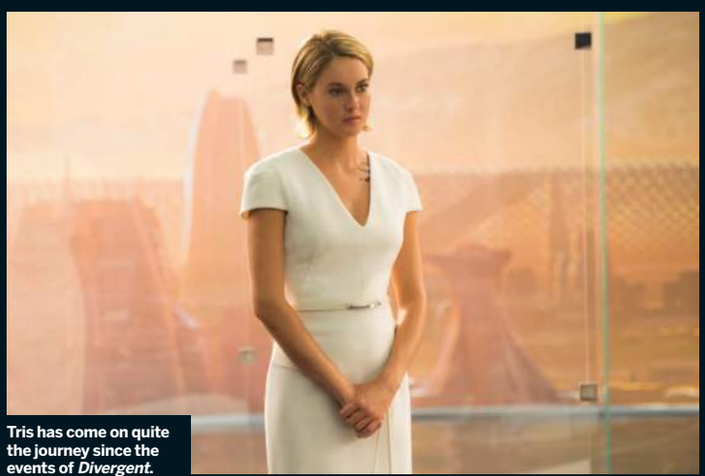


Tris (Shailene Woodley) and Four (Theo James)' story continues in *Allegiant*.

Though we might not share Tris's specific fears – drowning, intimacy or being devoured by crows – we all have the ability to harbour them, which is why Woodley believes a lot of fans have seen themselves in Tris over the course of the series.

"I think they like it because it's very relatable," she tells us. "Tris didn't start off as a superhero; she started off as a weak, vulnerable, insecure young woman, and then through each movie she has physically and emotionally gained strength, and she has become more wise inherently just by her own natural progression in life. But at the same time these movies are a fabrication of a future, and so they are a little bit out of grasp. When I go to see a movie like *Spider-Man* or a Marvel film, I leave feeling like I can climb a building or fly. I think the feeling I get when I watch those movies is similar to the feeling young people get when they watch these films, because they want to be like Tris. And now they've been able to see her evolution, and so I think it provides a good example about how they can garner their own strength."

As well as being a bad-ass hero, Tris has often been praised for being a strong female character in a genre where strong female characters are often hard to come by. But what does that mean to Woodley? "I think a strong woman recognises that it's okay to be vulnerable and it's okay to ask for help," she says, "and I think that a strong woman also recognises the importance of fully showing up for herself so that she can show up for the world. It's the same for men – their vulnerability is the greatest tool for strength and the greatest tool for bravery... some of the things that Veronica Roth depicted in her novels, like you'll never be fearless, but you can choose to be brave in the face of fear – I totally misquoted that,



Tris has come on quite the journey since the events of *Divergent*.



Rather impressively, James isn't feeling the pressure yet.

> **"TRIS WILL NEVER STOP GRIEVING FOR HER PARENTS... SHE'S GOING FORWARD WITH THEIR LEGACY ATTACHED TO HER OWN"**
> SHAILENE WOODLEY

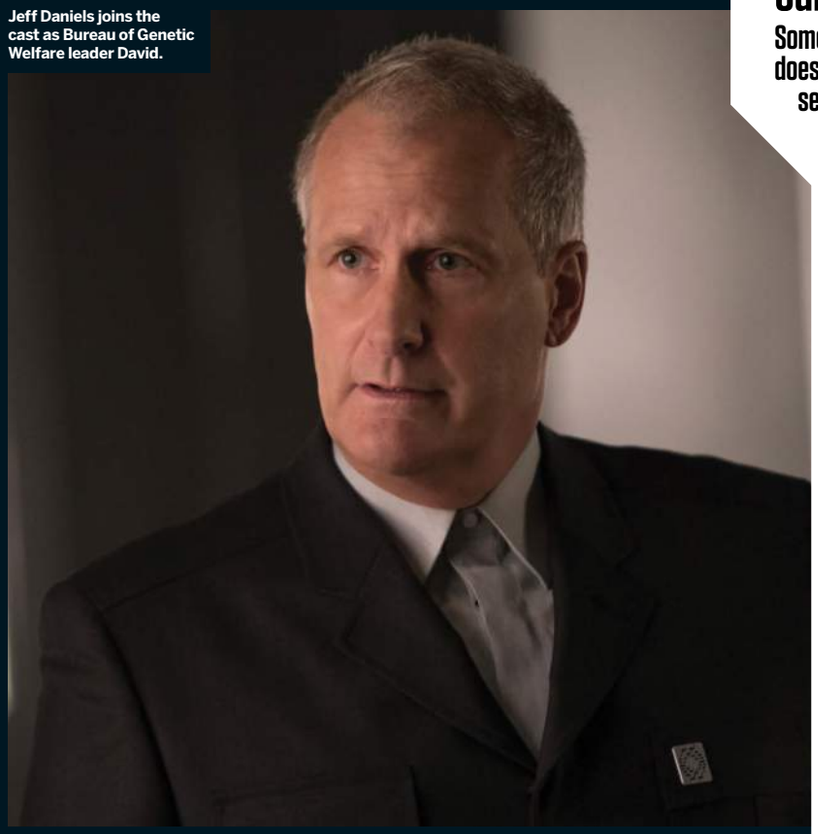
but it's something like that. Those are particular truths that have stuck with me, made me think and change my paradigm of thought."

The title of the fourth film in the series – *Ascendant* – suggests that *Allegiant* is going to see a change in Tris. Up until now she has been a survivor and an activist, but before the series draws to a close we're going to see her transform into the leader she was born to be. Would Woodley like life to imitate art and get involved with activism herself?

"It's always a fine balance, because as an actor you're an artist, and you don't know how much you can integrate it," she says. "I think that they matter to the world, and there are a lot of things we don't know about. It doesn't matter what your passion is, but I think it's important to find something that you're actively passionate about, and do something about it and really take a stand. And it feels really good to be in service for your own sanity, it's sort of like a meditation when you're in service for other people. You all of a sudden become a much nicer and happier human being because you're humbled immediately.

"And as far as leadership goes, I don't know that anyone is a leader. I think we all have the ability to step up and do something and to maybe lead, but there are so many leaders. I think what makes a really profound leader is someone who recognises collaboration and puts others before themselves. You can look at Martin Luther King – he was a leader, and yet he was also a





Jeff Daniels joins the cast as Bureau of Genetic Welfare leader David.

collaborator. He was also a person who listened to the people around him, and in that sort of way I guess that's one of the greatest ways to become a leader."

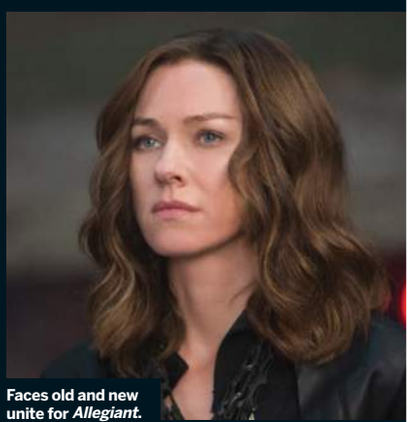
Needless to say, *Allegiant* has two successful forebears to live up to – not to mention an entire sub-genre full of similar films – but closing off, James doesn't feel under pressure to reinvent the YA wheel. "In a franchise, you're always trying to one up the last one and make it better than the first one or the second one, so I never particularly reflect that, 'Bingo, we've kind of nailed it'. It always feels like there's more room to do better, to grow and create more interesting parts of the narrative.

"In general, and I have said this before, but I still think it's relevant, young people particularly are looking at their own futures consciously or subconsciously. They're wondering what their worlds will look like, so these apocalyptic movies in some ways, whether it's this or a plethora of movies that has dealt with this, *Blade Runner* even, people are wondering what the world will look like for their kids, because it's changing very rapidly, and I think that's a natural question for young people."

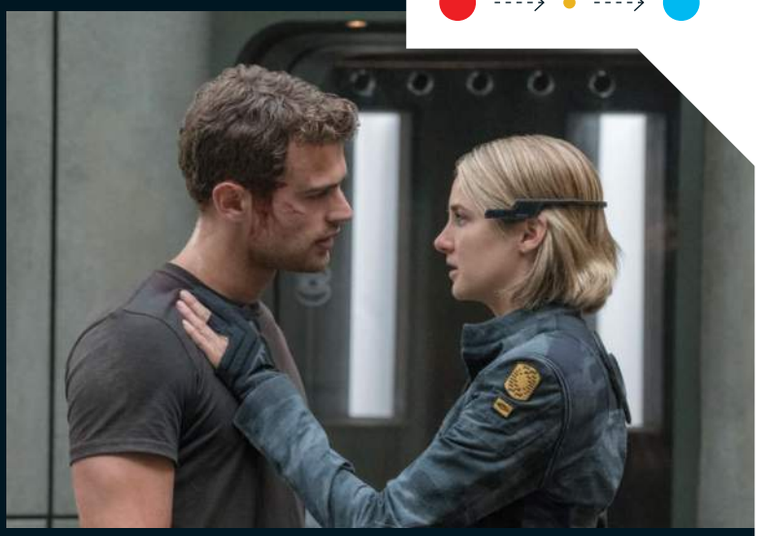
The Divergent Series: Allegiant will be released in UK cinemas on 11 March.



The ante is certainly getting upped in this penultimate outing.



Faces old and new unite for *Allegiant*.



Survival of the fittest

Sometimes a hit YA book series doesn't even make it to the second film. Here's how the big franchises and flops fared...

KEY Budget Domestic Worldwide

THE DIVERGENT SERIES (ONGOING SERIES)
Combined Budget $195m
Combined Domestic $280.3
Combined Worldwide $586.2

THE HUNGER GAMES (COMPLETED SERIES)
Budget $493m
Domestic $1.450bn
Worldwide $ 2.965bn

THE TWILIGHT SAGA (COMPLETED SERIES)
Budget $385m
Domestic $1.363bn
Worldwide $3.343bn

MAZE RUNNER (ONGOING SERIES)
Budget $95m
Domestic $184.1m
Worldwide $660.6m

THE HOST (CANCELLED SERIES)
Budget $40m
Domestic $26.6m
Worldwide $63.3m

BEAUTIFUL CREATURES (CANCELLED SERIES)
Budget $60
Domestic $19.5m
Worldwide $60.1m





TENEMENT SHOCKS

BEN WHEATLEY TELLS US ABOUT TAKING ON HIGH-RISE, TOM HIDDLESTON AND COOKING DOGS

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

JG BALLARD'S HIGH-RISE STARTS AT THE END, WHICH ISN'T TOO REMARKABLE. THEN AGAIN... "AS HE SAT ON HIS BALCONY EATING THE DOG, DR ROBERT LAING REFLECTED ON THE UNUSUAL EVENTS THAT HAD TAKEN PLACE WITHIN THIS HUGE apartment building during the previous three months."

High-Rise has endured as arguably his masterpiece, a searing, wickedly funny and horrifying look at a society going to war with itself – the upper classes against the lower – kept within the confines of a newly built tower block. Written in 1975, it has gone through several filmmakers, including David Cronenberg and Vincenzo Natali, but *Kill List*'s Ben Wheatley will finally bring it to the big screen.

"I'd read it when I was a teenager, and it had always been kicking around in my head," Wheatley tells us. "And over

time I was just thinking, 'Why hasn't it been made?' After *A Field In England*, Amy [Jump, Wheatley's partner and collaborator] and I were thinking about what were we going to do next, and we were looking at licensing books, and that was one that we had. I contacted my agent and he said that [producer] Jeremy Thomas had it, and then within three days I was chatting to him about it."

Although Wheatley and Jump have worked on scripts written by other people before (like black comedy *Sightseers*), this is the first time that they've adapted a novel for the big screen, and it's one of our best-loved books by one of our best-loved authors. You would assume that doing this brings with it a lot of pressure.

"Any film is intimidating. Any time you step up to the bat you've taken a load of people's money, and you've got to make something, and then it'd better be good, otherwise you don't get to do it again! And that's absolutely fucking harrowing every time. This film was also complicated, because it was a lot of characters and big set builds and all that kind of stuff. But in terms of dealing with the legacy of Ballard, you can't really think like that, otherwise it's too scary, and you don't want to double-guess it. Amy wrote the script and I filmed the script, and that's the only way I can protect myself from Ballard and the book."

So after that arresting prologue, *High-Rise* really begins as our protagonist, handsome neurosurgeon Dr Robert Laing (beautifully played by Tom Hiddleston), arrives in the building and begins to mingle with its occupants. With rolling power cuts and arguments about the facilities, it's not long before tensions reach breaking point between the snobs at the top (led by Jeremy Irons' architect Anthony Royal) and the poorer tenants at the bottom (represented by Luke Evans' boozy alpha Richard Wilder). Laing finds himself torn between the two factions, slipping between them as things start to get violent.

It's an incredible cast, with the three aforementioned actors backed up by Elisabeth Moss (as Wilder's neglected, pregnant wife Helen) and Sienna Miller (the kindly sociable Charlotte Melville), with James Purefoy, Keeley Hawes, Sienna Guillory and Peter Ferdinando rounding out the upper-class toffs, and Reece Shearsmith, Enzo Cilenti and Stacy Martin occupying the floors lower down. It seems like a film that actors were dying to be a part of, but Wheatley tells us that there was only ever one man for Laing.

"Definitely Hiddleston – we wanted him for Laing from the start," he enthuses. "Because you look at who's out there, and Tom's so perfect for that control. He's erotic, but kind of neurotic! And he's kind of a threat, but he's super intelligent as well. That was perfect for us."

That unreadable combination is what makes Laing confound expectations. Given Hiddleston's star status and the character's apparent decency, we keep expecting him to step in, take a side and do something. As the film goes on, we realise that his survival instincts make him slippery and detached, going back and forth between the increasingly outraged Wilder and the icily immovable Royal. Is this someone that we want to be rooting for?

"It's scary, and it's in the heart of the book," Wheatley explains. "I remember when I re-read it, I made a lot of assumptions about what was going to happen, [Laing's] going to be the alpha male, and oh, he's not. Okay, and then Wilder is, and he's not either, shit, and Royal… shit, he's not either, and that was really interesting for me. It's slightly nervy when you make a film where your matinee idol main character just doesn't get involved and steps back, but I think that's good, because the cowardice of it is the centre of the modern problem, isn't it? It's not doing anything and just letting it all slide, and I think that felt more human."

The combination of social commentary, dark humour and sudden, shocking violence feels very much like an ideal mixture for a Wheatley film, and it's the former that makes *High-Rise* seem absolutely relevant. "It was so prescient," Wheatley enthuses. "Ballard's stuff is weird because, even though some of it is very specifically period, it still feels like it's happening now. That's possibly due to the way that we seem to go in and out of boom and bust, and in and out of recession. It's like a permanent Seventies and then Eighties all the time. Slightly different pop music, but the reality of everybody's houses are all fucked and they're being turfed out of their houses, and after, oh no, everyone's drinking champagne, and you're alright again. You just change the names of the terrorist groups, and the same kind of paranoia and government control seemed to be happening again. It wasn't like a story that was set in aspic in the past; it was something that was happening now."

However, Wheatley chose not to update the time period, keeping the film as close as possible to Ballard's vision of the near future from 1975. "You could do it right now about what's happening in London, and people just wouldn't want to know," he tells us. "They'd be tired of it. 'Oh right, are you criticising me personally, directly about this?' That was part of it. Amy and I were born in '72, so we know that period and we wanted to make something that was a little bit of our parents and looking at it from that perspective. Also, I'd been thinking about things that made me feel uneasy and afraid, and the Seventies was one of them. There's something about the Seventies that I find quite frightening."

There's obviously a huge amount of nostalgia for the Seventies in our culture when it comes to fashion, music and movies, but Wheatley tells us that subverting that warm and cosy feeling wasn't what he was interested in for *High-Rise*. "I think it's the last point in history that there's an understanding of what the future will be," he tells us. "Because towards the end of the Seventies the future is *Mad Max* and post-apocalyptic stuff, and I guess *Blade Runner* is the end of it. Before that it was jet packs and travelling to planets, and that was a possible future. After that it isn't. When you see modern science fiction, everything looks like iPads, doesn't it? That doesn't feel like the future, it just feels like now, only a bit better. So I think that was kind of interesting, that the future was a mystery in the Seventies, and it doesn't feel like a mystery anymore. That's probably partially to do with postmodernism has kind of fucked it up, there's no dreams of that stuff anymore because it feels a bit naff, but you could have those big, thrusting dreams and thoughts then, and it would feel right."

The time period also allowed Wheatley to portray the great staple of the Seventies: the boozy, smoke-filled party. Some of the film's most claustrophobic moments come as Laing attempts to fit in at social gatherings, getting shunned from the ludicrous penthouse party (French period costume, a string quartet playing ABBA's *SOS*) and getting completely wrecked with Wilder, smoking, drinking, dancing and generally embracing his inner animal.

"I think the scene where Luke and Tom dance in the party was the last day of the shoot… they really let rip," remembers Wheatley. "It's the tough thing of making sure those sequences feel alive. I really hate that in movies, where you see there's no energy in those parties. The hard thing is smoke, I was trying to get them to make it as smoky as things were then, and it's really difficult! I remember it as being just like a fucking fog! Not being able to see anything!



As the film progresses, tensions spiral to well beyond breaking point.





Tom Hiddleston stars as conflicted surgeon and high-rise resident Robert Laing.





"TOM'S PERFECT FOR THE ROLE – HE'S EROTIC, BUT KIND OF NEUROTIC!"
BEN WHEATLEY



Director Ben Wheatley on the set of *High-Rise*.

We didn't quite get there, but it was nice to see so many people smoking in the film, it actually looked like it used to look. It's going to a party when you're sober, isn't it, and everyone else is drunk – it is a terrifying experience!"

The combination of claustrophobic hysteria, moments of visceral brutality and generally outrageous behaviour make for a film that definitely provokes a strong reaction from the audience. There are laughs, there are shocks and there are moments where you pretty much just hold your breath. Having taken it around film festivals from Toronto to London, Wheatley tells us that every screening is different.

"I always love watching stuff with an audience, it's really interesting. It's a difficult one, because the film is funny, and there's lots of jokes in it, and I've been a lot of screenings of it and the laughs are all in different places every time. It's not consistent! You go '…and the laugh …oh, okay?' and then they laugh at something else. The movie's very tense, which is as it should be. It's interesting reading [reviews] and seeing which way people go with it… if they go with it. I've watched it a lot of times now, but I think it's certainly a movie that grows as you watch it again and again." As for expectations, he is aware that people will be coming in with their own ideas. "You can't help that, there's nothing you can do. It's great that they do come at all! I think it's difficult when I watch movies that I'm excited about, it's always dangerous, isn't it? You project onto it, and sometimes you just have to come to terms to it in a different way."

As we're getting ready to leave, we realise that we haven't asked about the dog, and we ask if there were ever any complaints about Tom Hiddleston cooking and eating an Alsatian. "No, it's really weird!" he exclaims. "No one said anything about that. But we've fake-slaughtered so many animals in our films." You'll definitely remember this one. Welcome to *High-Rise*.

High-Rise will be released in UK cinemas on 18 March.

MEET THE TENANTS

Your guide to your new neighbours in the high-rise. Enjoy your stay...



DR ROBERT LAING

New to the building. A neurosurgeon. Seems well intentioned, but he's tricky to read. Definitely one of the best amenities in the building, but he'll have to pick a side at some point.



CHARLOTTE MELVILLE

The most sociable woman in the building, Charlotte is on all sorts of committees, and would love to help you get settled in. Has a young son, Toby, the father of whom is unknown.



ANTHONY ROYAL

The building's architect, Anthony lives on the top floor with his wife Ann and their horse. Hard to find but dedicated to his work. Just don't ask about the power cuts. One of the more powerful tenants.



RICHARD WILDER

Boozy, loud, violent. One of the lower-down types. He's a troublemaker, an instigator, and he's going to be difficult to get rid of. Will his attempts to upset the status quo result in something drastic?



HELEN WILDER

Wilder's wife seems like the decent sort, unlike her husband, and is very heavily pregnant. Being left alone so often by her husband can't be doing her any good; she does seem awfully lonely.



JANE SHERIDAN

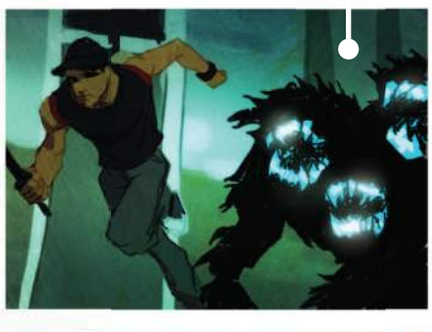
Yes, *the* Jane Sheridan. We're very lucky to have a famous actress living with us in the high-rise, and she's often kind enough to sign an autograph if you happen to catch her in the supermarket.

TOWER OF TERROR

Here are some tips to help you enjoy your stay...

HIGH-RISE (2016)
Visitors to the rooftop may admire Mrs Royal's horse, but don't pet it without her permission. Now, please enjoy ABBA.

ATTACK THE BLOCK (2011)
Please refrain from running, unless you are acting as bait for ravenous killer aliens.



[REC] (2007)
It's important that all tenants get along, so in the case of a zombie outbreak, for example, they can work together with the authorities to try and survive and find a way out.

HIGH-RISE (2016)
Our apartments come with spacious balconies that can be used for relaxation, parties, sunbathing... If you are going to barbeque, check with your neighbours first.

SLEEP TIGHT (2011)
If you have any problems at all, please contact our live-in doorman/caretaker César. Day or night, he will come into your apartment and... actually, best not to call César.



DREDD (2012)
Just a reminder to any criminals looking to set up shop here in Peach Trees. Ma-Ma is not the law. Dredd is the law. Slo-mo or not, everyone falls at the same speed.

DARK WATER (2002)
It has come to our attention that there is a water leak situation that may be linked to a dead girl. Apologies.

THE LIFT (1983)
Following a number of complaints, we urge tenants not to use the lift. There's a very good chance that it's haunted/sentient, and is finding ways to kill people.



SHIVERS (1975)
In the event that the building is infested by sexually transmitted slug-like parasites that turn everyone into sex-crazed monsters, we may as well all head to the pool.

ROSEMARY'S BABY (1968)
Arriving in a new building can be intimidating, but we think you'll find that the tenants' association has your best interests at heart, and your baby's. He has his father's eyes.

INFERNO (1980)
In the event that one of the tenants is revealed to be one of the Three Mothers, we advise not taking on that witch. We won't be held responsible for fire/skeleton damage.

CANDYMAN (1992)
There may be some truth to the rumours that this building used to be a housing project. Because of this, we don't advise exploring behind the mirror or saying 'Candyman' five times.

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FEAR
OF
GOD



WE TALK TO THE CAST AND DIRECTOR OF THE WITCH ABOUT CREATING AN AUTHENTIC AMERICAN NIGHTMARE

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

WITCHES AREN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE. WE'VE GROWN COMFORTABLE WITH THE IDEA OVER THE YEARS, AND WE'VE GOT USED TO THE CRONE WITH the pointy hat and the wart on the end of her nose, or the fabulous women of television's *American Horror Story* slaying their way through New Orleans. It's been far too long since we saw something that gave them back their power to terrify. Robert Eggers' debut film is set to remedy this particular problem.

"I read the script the night before [the audition], and I wasn't able to sleep at all," star Anya Taylor-Joy (Cassandra in the BBC's ill-fated *Atlantis*) tells us. "By the end of it I was completely rigid on my bed and absolutely terrified. A script hadn't really done that to me before."

"I had to put it down, I was a bit overwhelmed by it," agrees her co-star Ralph Ineson. "It's not often you get such a physical reaction from a script, but at one point I just had to stop and go and sit with my wife, have a chat and watch a bit of telly and calm down a little bit, because it was just too intense. Very powerful to get that from a script."

The Witch tells the story of an intensely Puritanical family in the 1630s who leave their plantation to start a life on their own on the edge of the woods, driven by their father William (Ineson)'s belief that they need to be closer to God. They're struggling to get by, but when their baby goes missing and the crops fail, William and his wife Katherine (Kate Dickie) begin to believe that something evil is at work. Has the devil got into their oldest daughter Thomasin (Taylor-Joy)?

"I basically said, 'I want to make an archetypal New England horror story, and therefore it's going to be about witches and it's going to be in the 17th century,'" explains Eggers. "It was striking to me how true it was. Aside from the extreme intelligentsia, in the early modern period the fairy-tale world and the real world were the same thing. So in folk tales and in historical accounts of witchcraft, it's the same material."

THE NOTION OF good and evil and the threat of witchcraft is a palpable and terrifying presence in *The Witch*. This family is already at breaking point when the accusation is made, and watching them struggle to hold together as more and more disasters befall them gives the film a devastating emotional impact. Once the word 'witch' is uttered, there's no going back from it. "It held so much weight," explains Taylor-Joy. "You introduce that word, and then the tension just shoots right up, and the implications of it are so grim."

"Witches were so real in those times," agrees Dickie. "Women were being burned for real. They were a very real and true fear."

The film strikes a balance between this historically accurate paranoia and hardship, and introducing the possibility of the supernatural. While the facts of pilgrim life are portrayed in all their brutality, the sense ⇨





The intense faith of the family leads to some terrifying accusations.



of something lurking just beyond the trees makes the film as chilling as it is affecting. "We probably were walking quite a fine line, and we didn't realise it," Dickie tells us. "But because we were in Rob's hands he was just so clear and so knowledgeable, you just always felt safe and you didn't worry about making mistakes, because you knew he knew it inside out and back to front, and he would keep you right."

That knowledge of the period is clearly demonstrated in the film's incredible attention to detail. Not only was *The Witch* shot using natural light whenever possible, but the costumes and set design were all period accurate. "It was really essential that this 17th century world be depicted as authentically as we could possibly manage so that the witch could be real to audiences the way she would have been to people in the early modern period," explains Eggers. "Period accurate doesn't mean good, but in this film it seemed like the right choice. And it also rallies everybody creatively because you know how high the bar is. There was very little compromise. The farm, the clothing, you need the right materials and the clothes need to be hand-stitched, and there were just things that it needed to be to be acceptable and truthful. Forget about looking good; they need to be wearing wool and linen and hemp, that's the only choice. That's the end of the story."

"OH GOD, YEAH, we were so spoiled!" laughs Dickie. "So spoiled! I mean, they built the house using traditional methods of the time! They realised that if you used modern things it wouldn't leave the same markings on the wood and it would be too smooth. All this attention to detail just makes your job so much easier and a lot more enjoyable."

Eggers' determination not to compromise extended to giving the actors the time they needed to properly prepare. To be a believable family unit united against the wilderness, the writer-director gave his cast a week to rehearse and bond before filming started.

"It was amazing," Dickie enthuses. "The fact that we were all there on our own in somewhere in the middle of nowhere away from all our loved ones, we literally did really become this family, this raggle-taggle family."

"I think there were only two other rooms in the whole hotel that weren't us and the kids," adds Ineson. "So it was like our house. We had all this time to rehearse and eat together. Just running scenes, me and Kate talking to the kids in the hotel in an informal way so it doesn't feel like work. We built up some really great and close bonds between the lot of us, which really helps, because if you're doing something that intense, where you've got to break apart a family, there's got to be something to break apart. The intensity of that family unit had to be there for the audience to invest in it. They have to believe that there was something really, really powerful back in England and that it's slowly fallen apart as this great adventure's gone on."

> "WE PROBABLY WERE WALKING QUITE A FINE LINE AND WE DIDN'T REALISE IT... WE WERE IN ROB'S HANDS"
> KATE DICKIE

That close bond would be crucial given the hardships that they would face during the course of shooting. "What's The Smiths' lyric, 'I can laugh about it now but at the time it was terrible'?" laughs Ineson. "Looking back at it, a lot of that hardship contributes to the feel of the film. It was the isolation of it and the fact that we were all thousands of miles away from home, living in this place in the middle of nowhere, driving out to the middle of the woods, working a very hard schedule. It was a very short shoot to get the amount of stuff we needed doing, and it was very cold. I had to fight the goat a lot of times, and about a week and a half into shooting he managed to gore me in the ribs, so for more than half the shoot I was in a lot of pain with all that. It was physically very hard work, especially with rib injuries! If we'd gone to five-star hotels or gone back to wife and kids of an evening you just wouldn't have had that kind of haunted intensity that is in the film."

The cast's commitment to the project is clear, but what's even more evident is





Ralph Ineson stars as proud father William.





Kate Dickie tells us that rehearsals were key to creating the family.



Harvey Scrimshaw as the fearful Caleb.



their total admiration for their director. "I've never wanted to please someone the way I wanted to please Rob, he's so incredibly special and he'd written something amazing," Taylor-Joy tells us. "He definitely allowed you to play, and I'd ask him, 'Did I do it the way you saw in your head?' and he would say, 'Anya, Thomasin was mine, and now she belongs to the two of us, and we'll make her together.' That was just a wonderful freedom and collaborative experience."

"He was very clear," adds Dickie. "But he didn't sort of put it upon you; he just made it the right kind of atmosphere for you to find it. There's a lot of clarity about Rob, and no matter what question you had about that period, oh my God he's like a walking encyclopaedia. He had so much stuff at his fingertips, it was amazing. It makes you feel very safe, and it makes you feel brave and courageous to make certain choices that you maybe wouldn't in lesser hands."

This dedication has certainly paid off. *The Witch* premiered to a rapturous reception at Park City, and is one of this year's most hotly anticipated horror films. It's beautiful and chilling, and makes one hell of an impact on the viewer. "What's really lovely about it is that even though I haven't watched any horror movies, I can understand what it is about *The Witch* that makes it special," enthuses Taylor-Joy. "It's not specific to the horror genre; it's about filmmaking as a whole. *The Witch* doesn't underestimate its audience; you have to work a little bit at it, and it creates a very intelligent and very thoughtful piece of work that's very different. Whenever I talk to my friends they're like, 'I'm really excited to see it!' I'm like 'You're not really going to… enjoy it! It's definitely going to be something different and shocking, but you're not going to have fun watching it.'"

"It is one of those ones that gets such a silent reaction," laughs Ineson. "It's not like they burst into applause or cheer at the end, it's just, 'Oh my fucking God, I feel like shit!' Everybody just looks vaguely drawn and haunted at the end of it, which I know Rob loves."

The Witch will be released in cinemas on 11 March.

Mark Of The Devil

Witches on trial

Leena Miller
(All Cheerleaders Die)
This young witch used her fiendish Wiccan powers to bring a group of cheerleaders back from the dead, and assisted them in their quest for brutal vengeance.



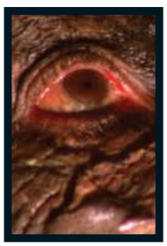
Conal Cochran
(Halloween III: Season Of The Witch)
Mr Cochran has stolen pieces of Stonehenge to execute a terrifying ritual that will turn kids' heads into insects and snakes.



Nancy Downs
(The Craft)
With her three school friends, Nancy abused the powers of the guardians to boost their self-esteem, punish schoolmates and finally attack each other.



The Mother Of Sighs
(Suspiria)
We believe that a dance academy outside Freiburg is actually a front for a coven of witches. We're not sure what their endgame is though.



Asa Vajda
(Black Sabbath)
Put to death, but that didn't stop her from rising from the dead and feeding on the blood of the living. She plans to attain immortality by feeding on her descendant.



WITCHFINDER
Matthew Hopkins
(Witchfinder General)
Your dedicated public servant will do whatever necessary to weed out this Satanic menace and put them to the fiery flames of justice.



HERE BE ALIENS

FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF MISFITS, E4 IS LOOKING TOWARDS GHETTO-BASED ET DRAMA THE ALIENS AS ITS NEXT BIG GENRE HIT. WE WENT TO THE SET FOR A CLOSE ENCOUNTER WITH THE CAST AND CREW...

WORDS **COLIN CRUMMY**





THE ALIENS

Here Be Aliens

IT FEELS LIKE WE'RE IN A SCENE FROM THE NEWS. A CITY'S MAIN STREET HAS TURNED INTO A REFUGEE CAMP. A PLACE WHERE A TOYOTA HIACE IS PARKED, OPERATING AS A roadside one-bed. Flimsy two-person tents block the pavement, rubbish spilling out of one, junk for sale out of the other. Squats line the street, makeshift clothes lines the only real sign of human life. But this is not a refugee camp, as familiar as that scene is in 2016, Nor is it skid row from an Eighties rock video. It could be the live-action imagining of a *Grand Theft Auto* ghetto, but it is not that either. It's not even that human a place. We're in Troy, home to aliens.

That's according to the new vision of extra terrestrials from the makers of E4's *Misfits*. New comedy drama *The Aliens* isn't set in a galaxy far, far away, but in the modern world – a fictitious English satellite town, to be precise – with some very slight, surreal tweaking. In reality, we are on set with the cast and crew from *Aliens* on a huge studio lot just outside the Bulgarian capital Sofia. Around the corner from Troy are backlots for a posh London street, a Roman coliseum and white picket fence suburbia.

But back to aliensville, and the slum conditions we're stepping into can be easily explained by the six 60-minute episode show's back story. *The Aliens*' premise is that 40 years ago, ETs landed on our shores and progressively became ghettoised until we built a wall around them, and now only let them out to work for us. We don't like them very much. Sound eerily familiar? Writer Fintan Ryan, also responsible for some of Series Two of BBC Three's *In The Flesh*, explains: "The aliens are controlled and allowed out to work where they are monitored – that's it. Inside their area it's supposed to be autonomous, but that means it's the law of the jungle. It's about that: if a population of people were to do that to a population of people, what might happen?"

It's this blend of social reality and sci-fi that *The Aliens*' maker Clerkenwell Films has successfully channelled to award-winning effect before. It took the superhero genre and subverted it by giving all the power to kids with ASBOs in the BAFTA-winning *Misfits*. This time, Clerkenwell wanted to do something with aliens. Like *Misfits*, *The Aliens* is a blend of social commentary, comedy and comic-book violence. And the aliens are more like us than we'd imagine. They appear and act the same, but have defining qualities. Alien hair, for example, is a narcotic to humans. This leads to a huge illegal trade in the drug.

Not that law matters much in Troy, a police-free zone where rival drug barons wage war. The show's writer loved the idea of creating the lawless world within our own. "The thing that leapt out to me was ⇨

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ON LOCATION WITH THE ALIENS

Why Bulgaria was the perfect Troy stand-in

Filming for *The Aliens* took place on what looks at first glance like a Hollywood studio backlot. Turn the corner from a New York street, and you're transported into London with replica Tube station, St Paul's Cathedral and a Mark And Spencer. Keep going, and you'll walk through the kind of Americana suburbia that's ripe for a slasher movie, or further still, pop round Ancient Rome. The location is actually Nu Boyana Film Studio outside the Bulgarian capital Sofia, the largest film studio in Eastern Europe. The team behind *The Aliens* built their world left to ruin there. They also made use of the surrounding countryside's former industrial glories, shooting on location at an old Communist era steel making factory. It gives the show a big, widescreen feel and a visual sense of something alien. "What's also great about filming in Bulgaria is the locations you can get to within striking distance of Sofia," says executive producer Matt Jarvis. "There were old communist buildings and factories so when we do a set piece there, whether it's a Mexican-style stand-off or a gangster shoot-out, we have these amazing locations you wouldn't be able to find in the UK anymore."

that idea of two towns, a place inside a place that's completely different," says Ryan. "There were other elements, like you can't really do crime in England without it being cockney gang lords, so just being able to let rip into a *Sin City*-style place where anything goes was great, a place where the world is turned upside down."

Enter a man whose own universe is about to get turned upside down. The show's protagonist is Lewis (*Being Human*'s Michael Socha), a checkpoint guard at the border between Troy and the rest of the UK. Lewis is "a normal, mild-mannered young lad" with a troublesome drug and booze-addled family. In episode one, Lewis makes a discovery that sets *The Aliens*' plot into motion. "Lewis quite quickly finds out he is half alien, and then the whole world just falls apart," says Socha. "He doesn't like working on the border. Humans have been taught not to like aliens, and Lewis doesn't like aliens; he finds them disgusting. So the show is about him coming to terms with himself."

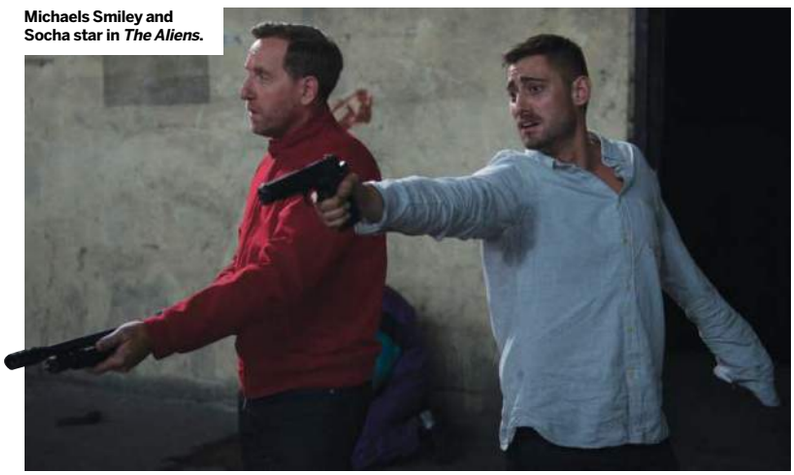
Before he can do that, he must get embroiled in the gang-riddled world of Troy, where fresh discovery awaits. Firstly, there's a certain family connection that will draw him into life on the other side of the border. Then there's the girl he's been watching on a pay-per-view site who turns out to be both alien and trouble. Lilyhot – played by *Chewing Gum* creator and star Michaela Coel – is *The Aliens*' femme fatale, a woman careering to the top of Troy's food chain. She is, as Coel explains, an alien with a game plan. "Lilyhot grew up very poor. She's fighting for power in a world that's dominated by men and gangsters. Troy is quite primitive, and one of Lilyhot's ways of gaining power is through her sexuality. That's how she's able to manipulate everyone into doing what she wants and finally sitting on top of the throne." In her way stands Fabien, the current gangland boss of Troy (Trystan Gravelle) and its former lynchpin, Antoine (Michael Smiley).

Without any law and order, *The Aliens* gets violent quickly. "In the beginning I'm involved with a very incompetent, low-level gang," says Coel of Lilyhot. "But really it's all a small game for me, because by the end of the first episode I get them killed and move on to the next gang that's a little bit higher, and then the next gang that's a little bit higher, and just kill people along the way."

So yes, there are some morally reprehensible ETs in *The Aliens*, a move by its writer to make the show more complex than its premise might suggest. It is not simply a case of bad people putting good folk in quarantine. "It's not a pure good and bad thing at all," says Ryan. "A lot of the aliens are nasty bastards." Equally, Troy isn't a complete hellhole. For Lewis, with a troubled family life back in regular old run-down suburbia, it represents an escape. He even makes an alien friend, Dominic (Jim Howick), who cleans the toilets at the border checkpoint. "He's incredibly loyal," says Howick of his character, "He offers Lewis, and indeed the show, a kind of anchor."

For the writer, Dominic and the show in a wider sense represent an opportunity to look at the bigger picture of how we operate with anything we see as alien. "I'm more interested in the prejudice you don't see, how we make people alien," Ryan says. "It's a more general thing about how we deal with the poor, all that stuff." He concludes. "I'd like to be a bit more confused than have it worked out."

The Aliens is coming soon to E4.



Michaels Smiley and Socha star in *The Aliens*.





In the Troy ghetto, fights are frequently in the air.





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BEING A SHOW CREATOR, IT SEEMS UNIMAGINABLE THAT DURING THE PRODUCTION OF A PILOT YOU'D HAVE ANY DOWNTIME WHATSOEVER, BUT FOR when those opportunities do present themselves, Bryan Fuller is fully prepared with a book to read. "There are books associated with every pilot I've done," laughs the executive producer of the recently concluded *Hannibal*. "I remember on *Pushing Daisies* I was reading *World War Z*, and on *Dead Like Me* I was reading *American Gods*."

That particular tome, written by Neil Gaiman, explores the notions of the old guys of Norse Mythology living among us, who are being 'squeezed out' by the new gods of money and technology. The focus of the forthcoming Starz TV series will be on the mysterious Shadow, a man who has been released from prison three days prior to his wife being killed in a car accident, and the enigmatic Mr Wednesday.

Enthuses Fuller, "I loved the world it presented almost more than the book, because it was such a glorious toy box that Neil presented, and it felt like it was the first step in to many great stories. It was a gift that kept giving.

"The sophistication of the story appealed to me," he adds. "It really was an immigration story above everything else. You remove the fantastical qualities of gods and what they can do, because so much of that is grounded in the book anyway."

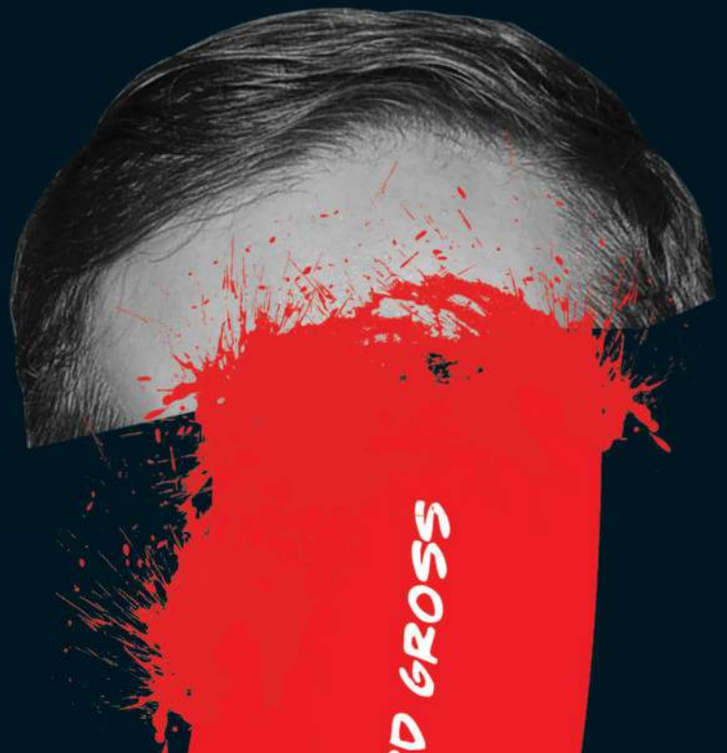
When he was first offered the show, Fuller was in the midst of production on *Hannibal*. At the close of Season Two, Gaiman flew to Toronto to personally ask him to take on the series.

"We had just finished filming at 6:30 that morning, and I was meeting Neil at noon," he reflects. "I'd actually had my *American Gods* hardcover, and I

INTERVIEW

THE MASTER OF CULT TV TALKS AMERICAN GODS

FULLER



WORDS EDWARD GROSS

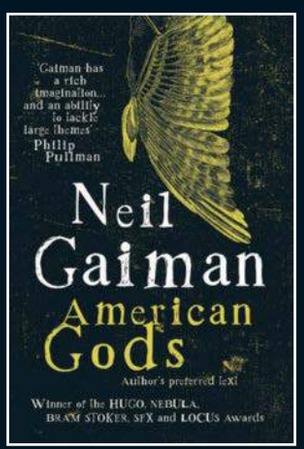
brought it to the meeting with Neil. The first thing he said was, 'My hands are so sore because I've been signing books one after the other.' My hand was on the book in my bag, sort of raising it up, and I just kind of tucked it back inside. But we had a wonderful conversation about storytelling and the nature of the relationship between Wednesday and Shadow, and how this was really about an estranged father trying to connect with his son, and adverse circumstances that were going to be rich with betrayal and intimacy and romance... I ended up saying, 'If *Hannibal* doesn't get a Season Three, I will jump in immediately.'"

But it did get renewed for a third season. Surprisingly though, everyone was willing to wait, which was great news for Fuller, though it made him realise he needed to bring in a co-creator/writing partner if he hoped to get *American Gods* into development while *Hannibal* was still in production.

"As we were telling the stories of *Hannibal* Season Three, work was going to have to be done on *American Gods* in terms of writing the pilot and the first couple of episodes," he says. "The first thing that occurred to me was that Michael Green, who I had worked with on the first season of *Heroes*, was someone I got along really well with. He understood storytelling and we understood each other's take on storytelling, so he felt like someone I could work with."

As to the dramatic thrust of the series, Fuller believes it will gradually tell the tale of an atheist who becomes an agnostic, who becomes a believer, who becomes a zealot, who becomes a demi-god who becomes a god.

"That's a fantastic arc for any protagonist to be taking," says Fuller. "To break it down in real-world sensibilities, there is beauty and awe, and what we get to see is a character in Shadow who has gone through so much turmoil, pain and loss, and then to see him discover beauty and awe in the universe is a magical thing. We were writing the scene where he summons snow, and isn't quite sure if he's summoning the snow or if it's something outside of him, or if it's inside of him. But the possibility of magic in this world is such an exciting glimpse, that I feel that is the power of the series. The opportunity to believe.



• With *Hannibal* finished, Bryan Fuller is now tackling a TV adaptation of Neil Gaiman's *American Gods*.

"There's a wonderful opportunity to arc this character over multiple seasons, and we're taking our sweet time with the storytelling at the encouragement of Starz," he closes. "Their experience with *Outlander* and working with Ron Moore was to slow down the story as much as you can and let the audience enjoy it.

"As a result, we're executing a meticulous weave of characters and storylines. We're not even a quarter of the way through the book with the finale of the first season. So it's very exciting to be able to take our time, to be able to work with Neil Gaiman. We get on the phone with him and pitch what we're doing, he gives us his thoughts... What you have in the book that Neil wrote is the *Reader's Digest* version of the tale, because we're getting into the nooks and crannies and blowing them out; making as much of them as we can."

American Gods will air on Starz in the US in 2017.

JUST



SOMEHOW

WORDS **POPPY-JAY PALMER**



FROM THE FALL OF ALEXANDRIA TO THE RISE OF NEGAN AND BEYOND, GREG NICOTERO GIVES US A CLUE ABOUT WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE WALKING DEAD SEASON SIX'S RETURN...

IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE THE WALKING DEAD HAS HAD A REALLY GOOD, OLD-FASHIONED VILLAIN. THE GROUP HAVE HIT OBSTACLES, SURE, WHAT WITH CANNIBALS running around and disagreeable peers at Alexandria, but since the Governor's death in Season Four, the show's antagonists have either been quashed too easily for our liking or have just been good guys doing bad things for the wrong reasons. It's about time we got another truly awful dictator ruling a community of people who don't know what else to do. That's all about to change now that Negan, played by *Watchmen*'s Jeffrey Dean Morgan, is joining in the fun.

For a teaser of what's to come in the second half of Season Six, we spoke to executive producer, special effects make-up artist and sometimes-director Greg Nicotero. Understandably, he's reluctant to spill too much about Negan and how he comes into the equation, but that doesn't stop him. ⇨



"I would say that it's a pretty faithful adaptation to his introduction in the comic-book," he says. "Jeffrey Dean Morgan is a phenomenal actor, and he had quite a bit to do when he came in, and he did it without blinking. I think the most exciting thing about *The Walking Dead* is that fans of the comic-books and fans of the show should brace themselves for the show to take a bit of a dramatic turn. It's something that's very exciting for a lot of us, because we really get the opportunity to redefine the show and take the show in a different direction with the introduction of Negan and his group of people. I don't know if I'd say supervillain, but he's our newest member of the world."

One of the show's best qualities has always been the strength of its antagonists, so how will Negan compare to the likes of Merle Dixon, Shane Walsh, the Governor and the Terminus cannibals? Will this be a whole new side to Morgan that fans haven't seen before? "Jeffrey has a really unique charm, which is tremendously appealing, so when you couple that with the darkness that his character brings, it's a fantastic combination, and I think Jeffrey plays Negan to the hilt. It's very fresh for our show.

I THINK ALL VILLAINS HAVE A SEDUCTIVE SIDE TO THEM, AND THAT'S WHAT'S DISARMING ABOUT THEM. YOU LOOK AT THESE BAD GUYS, AND YOU KIND OF REALISE THAT THEY'RE NOT always super arch, but they're layered. I think Jeffrey brings a tremendous layered performance. In my opinion, one of the greatest villains in recent movies was Kevin Spacey in *Se7en*, because there was just such menace about him, but he was quiet, calculating and intelligent. Those are things that I think Negan also possesses, those characteristics of being very, very smart and knowing how to manage and rule his world."

Nicotero doesn't let much slip about how Negan comes into the story past that, except for: "It's a great introduction and a great moment, but I don't really want to give out about who he meets." Interesting.

SPOILERS AHEAD – Those who are familiar with the comics will know that Glenn (Steven Yeun) has a bit of a rough time when Negan finally enters the picture. The storyline that progresses from that is something people have been desperate to see realised on screen for years. But after the reaction to Glenn's close call in the first half of the season, there's going to be a big backlash if he is in fact Negan's first victim.

"You know, one of the things that I think people really didn't embrace about the Glenn moment was the fact that if you put yourself in any of these characters shoes, when somebody says, 'I'm going out on a run, I'm going to go and do this, I'm going to go and do that,' and when you're standing at the front gate of Alexandria saying goodbye to somebody, they have to be prepared every single time that it might be the last time they ever see them," explains Nicotero. "What I find compelling about that, and what was important for the moment with Glenn, wasn't necessarily the Glenn part of it, but really about how Maggie dealt with it, how his disappearance added to their development of safe and hope that he's coming back, and it's a really interesting thing that we don't get to explore very often, which is you have to say goodbye every time somebody walks out those gates. That's what I thought was fascinating about it.

"The audience was taken on a journey, and we extended that moment for a couple of episodes, but that's part of the storytelling aspect of having numerous storylines happening at the same time. Glenn disappears at the end of episode three, and then episode four is a flashback with Morgan, and then episode five we get back to Alexandria and we have to experience Glenn's absence through Rick's eyes and through Maggie's eyes, and then of course episode six was Daryl, Abraham and Sasha's story. And then we finally get back to Glenn.

"It would be easy to wrap everything up, but the fact that people got so upset meant that they were emotionally invested in that character. It wasn't a cheap fake-out; it was an opportunity to tell the story – multiple stories – and keep the audience engaged, even though they were engaged and they were annoyed and angry about it. We knew there was going to be a reaction, but I don't think we knew it was going to be that. It was

> "Jeffrey Dean Morgan plays Negan to the hilt"
> Greg Nicotero



The group had to flee their home when the Walkers broke through the gates.



Gabriel has been quite unpredictable until now.





pretty insane, but in a great way. I remember talking to Steven the next day and thinking, 'Damn man, talk about love and talk about dedication to who you are as an actor that people are so excited and angry and sad.' I got a lot of notes on social media like, 'I can't believe you did that! I hate you! But keep doing a great job!' I got a lot of 'You suck' and 'I love you' at the exact same time!"

The Walking Dead is at its finest when people are suffering and guts are torn out. But between each catastrophe are episodes of self-evaluation from the surviving characters. The downtime can either be enlightening and give us a glimpse into the psyches of our favourite members of the group, or devastatingly boring. When the second scenario occurs, it's not uncommon for fans to start complaining about pacing issues, and a fair few seemed to have similar complaints about Season Six. According to Nicotero, the show is constantly taking this kind of feedback into account.

"We respect the fans' opinions because they have a voice, and that's the exciting part about creating any kind of show, and we're pretty dedicated to the story that we're telling," he tells us. "I'm always one of the first people to go on record and say so. Season Two was a season that most people felt was very slow, and they were like, 'Season Two was kind of boring, and I lost interest.' So [with] the impact of Sophia coming out of the barn and where Season Two went, I am a 100 per cent firm believer that if you go back and watch Season Two as a whole, it has a pace to it that has to build. You have to pay things off. You have to watch a movie like the *Exorcist* or *The Hateful Eight*. You have to tune your piano or tune your guitar perfectly before you can play a concerto. That tuning takes a little time, and that patience pays off. I hadn't heard that people felt that the pacing of the season was not to their liking. I would disagree with that because again I think everything has to build. If you came out of the gate showing Quint being eaten by the shark at the beginning of *Jaws*, where do you go from there?"





SINCE SEASON TWO, NICOTERO HASN'T MISSED A CHANCE TO GET IN THE WALKING DEAD'S DIRECTOR'S CHAIR, AND AS A RESULT HAS HELMED ALMOST A FIFTH OF the entire series. This season, he's taking on most of the benchmark episodes, including the premiere, the mid-season premiere and the finale. The enthusiasm he exudes while discussing his upcoming episodes makes getting excited extremely easy.

"It's safe to say that we've seen a pretty tremendous change in a lot of our characters through the course of the season. I think episode nine really catapults everyone into the direction they're going to take in the rest of the season. It's really the mid-season premiere that sets us on the course for the rest of the next eight episodes and lines up very cleanly where we're going. We're going to get a great opportunity to see some changes in Rick's character. Even more dramatic in Michonne, Glenn and Maggie, Daryl, you know… I think everybody has a lot of changes to go through, Abraham, Eugene… There are some fantastic moments with all of them. I directed the finale, and in my opinion it's one of the best episodes we've ever produced. It's so gripping, compelling, emotional and terrifying all at the same time, and it ends with such a build. I'm tremendously proud of it. Of course, the irony is nobody's seen it yet. I mean, even the other producers haven't seen it, so I'm sitting on this cut until Scott [M Gimple, the series' showrunner] catches up. The way that the show works is the directors turn in their cut, and then Scott goes in with notes from the other executive producers and makes changes to the episodes and then the episodes go to the networks. We're still wrapping up a couple of episodes, so nobody's seen it yet… it's driving me crazy!

"It's funny, because it's hard for us always to sit on episodes. We shot the mid-season premiere in August last year, so knowing what happens and knowing what's going on and what happens with everybody, you have to sit on it. And it's interesting because I haven't seen it in a while, so I'm excited to watch it again finished, but I can definitely tell you that episode nine rivals the premiere episode in terms of scale and scope. It was something that again, we challenged ourselves to do, and one of the things that we fought very hard for was having a lot of the episode take place at night. One thing that we don't get the opportunity to explore that often is night time, and setting the mood for scary, creepy and ominous. When you're running through the woods and the sun's out and it's bright and beautiful and there are zombies walking around in broad daylight, there's a very different dynamic ⇨



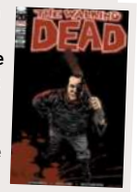
The Walker make-up is going to get even nastier.



Glenn and Enid are still looking for a way back home.

Negan is King

And by 'king' we mean the frea-'king' worst. Here are some examples…



When he beat Glenn to death with a baseball bat
Negan made quite the entrance in the comics when he took out his barbed wire-covered bat named Lucille and beat Glenn to death with it. After the whole "Is Glenn dead/is he not?" debacle in Season Six, part one, and the emotions that ensued, we're hoping the show skips this.



When he beat up Rick immediately afterward
Negan just *had* to rub salt in the wounds by telling them he'd come back to take half of Alexandria's possessions or they're be more deaths. When Rick challenged him, Negan laughed in his face before beating him up with his bare hands.

When Negan gutted Spencer
Sure, Spencer was being a complete diva, but cutting his guts out was a little uncalled for. The moment was made slightly bearable by Negan cracking a joke about Spencer not having any guts before he did it. Ha!

than using some of our tried-and-true horror tropes like the bogeyman coming out of the dark, and what's going to happen and where are they coming from and things like that. So episode nine really takes advantage of a lot of those sorts of classic genre moments."

THOUGH NICOTERO HAS A BLAST DIRECTING THE SERIES, HE AND THE CREW STILL FIND THEMSELVES UP AGAINST THE SAME CHALLENGES. "EPISODE NINE [WAS difficult] from the technical aspect, because the episode was a very big moment. The first episode, it's always a challenge to take the boat out of the harbour. I directed the season premiere for the last three years, and every time I'm tasked with reintroducing all of the characters to our audience and setting their stories into motion. One of the things that I really wanted to do in the first episode this season was to get a sense of the world outside Alexandria. I didn't want Alexandria to play too much like Main Street, USA, like, 'Oh! Everybody's safe! If they stay in the walls they'll be fine!' So we used a lot of big, wide shots, and I even used a droid to film the last shot of the first episode. We were able to get the drone several hundred feet up into the air because we wanted the audience to know that there is still a big world out there, and there are hidden obstacles, challenges and threats anywhere you look.

"You can never let your guard down, and I think that was my biggest challenge for a lot of this season, keeping the show big and keeping that scope so the show still feels like you still know there's a world out there, and that world is full of pitfalls. In the second half of the season I directed three episodes, and each one is very, very different. Episode nine is the siege of Alexandria, and then episode 12 has a little *Die Hard* feel to it, and the finale is just [an] absolutely amazing episode that you'll have to wait until April to see."

As a veteran special effects make-up artist, Nicotero's jump to directing may seem like a strange choice. But through working with prosthetics and fake blood for the last 32 years, he's also been working with the very best horror filmmakers, which has been a huge help in honing his own directing style.

"I've always looked [at my past projects as] the greatest boot camp in the world," he says. "I've worked on *Reservoir Dogs*, *Pulp Fiction*, *The Green Mile* and *Dances With Wolves*. I've stood next to Steven Spielberg, Robert Rodriguez and Frank Darabont, so my film training has been being in the trenches with these directors and watching how they work. Quentin [Tarantino] and Frank taught me how to relate to actors and ensemble pieces, and my special effects make-up background has allowed me to be able to understand how to craft effects sequences.

> "I would say every director that I've ever worked with, I've learnt something from them"
> Greg Nicotero

"In this day and age, I really wish that people were able to stand back and look at the filmmakers of the Eighties like John Carpenter, George Romero, Joe Dante, John Landis, Wes Craven and Sam Raimi, all these guys who I've had the good fortune to work with and realise just what students they are. I've learnt from all of them, so I would say every director that I've ever worked with, I've learnt something from them, something different, and I'm mixing up all these different styles and coming out with my own take on the filmmaker that I want to be. It's a dream come true."

The Walking Dead Season Six continues on 15 February at 9pm on FOX.



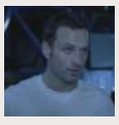
Maggie had a rough time at Alexandria while Glenn was still missing.

The Walking Head

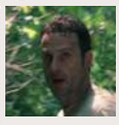
Rick's 'do and facial hair have a habit of reflecting his experiences with the end of the world...



1.01 Rick's short back-and-sides and clean-shaven face suit his squeaky clean pre-apocalypse cop aesthetic.



1.06 The pressure is on. Some people eat vast quantities of comfort food in times of stress. Rick grows stubble.



2.01 Rick's hair tends to get a bit damp when he's running from Walkers, like most people's. This could mean nothing.



2.13 The Walker attack on the Greene's farm really took its toll. The stubble starts to become more of a pre-beard.



3.01 Season Three marks the start of a beard-in-progress and Rick's hair can almost be described as "not regulation".



3.16 A grief-quiff forms, but the beard stays under control. The birth of baby Judith balances out the death of Lori.



4.01 Renouncing his leadership keeps Rick's hair in shape, but the beard has a mind of its own, no thanks to a new group of survivors.



4.16 Rick has become the hairy beast we know and love. All it took was a gruelling trek to the very disappointing Terminus.



5.01 Just when you thought he couldn't get more dishevelled... Being imprisoned by cannibals has a great effect.



5.16 The comfort of Alexandria meant the hair and beard had to go, but they're growing back both thick and fast.



6.01 Rick's back in control, and his hair and beard and *under* it. But not the long! It's still the end of the world, after all.



6.08 Everything has gone to shit, including his appearance. The added blood and guts are just a metaphor for his life.


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TOP 10s Read our lists relating to our favourite genre shows, and give your thoughts on whether we were right

AWARD EXPLAINED THE 'MUST SEE NOW' AWARD GOES TO REVIEWS THAT SCORE EIGHT OR MORE...

SciFiNow Must see now!

66 PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES

"MUCH MORE FUN THAN WE MIGHT HAVE EXPECTED"

TRIVIA *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES* REUNITES *GAME OF THRONES* CO-STARS LENA HEADEY AND CHARLES DANCE.

FILM INFO

Released
11 February
Certificate
15
Director
Burr Steers
Screenwriter
Burr Steers
Cast
Lily James, Sam Riley, Bella Heathcote, Douglas Booth, Matt Smith, Charles Dance, Lena Headey
Distributor
Lionsgate
Running Time
108 mins





PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES

Does exactly what it says on the tin

It makes sense to be sceptical about *Pride And Prejudice And Zombies*. It's been in production for years, it's gone through a bunch of directors, writers and stars, and it's based on a zeitgeist-y book that might not have been that great now that we think about it. And *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* was godawful.

But while scepticism makes sense, it's not necessary, as writer-director Burr Steers has created something that's much more fun than we might have expected.

An illustrated prologue explains how the zombie plague came to England, and how the wealthy holed up in London until it was safe to return to their heavily fortified country homes. However, the undead are still very much at large, and the living must be watchful.

So, the Bennet sisters have been trained for battle under the watchful eye of their father (Charles Dance) and mother (Sally Phillips), the latter of which is anxious to marry her daughters off. They attend a ball where Jane (Bella Heathcote) catches the eye of Mr Bingley (Douglas Booth), but Elizabeth (Lily James) is infuriated by the incredibly rude Mr Darcy (Sam Riley). Despite the attentions of the obsequious Mr Collins (Matt Smith), Lizzie is determined that she will never put down her sword for the sake of a man because the right man wouldn't ask her to.

The film opens with the book's tagline that "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a zombie in possession of brains must be in need of more brains," before launching into a gruesome sequence of Mr Darcy sniffing out a zombie at a card game and taking him out with a broken sherry glass. The combination of violence and Austen riffs works quite well, but the film is best when it sticks to the classic story, something that Steers obviously understands and does whenever possible.

Lily James (*Cinderella*) makes for both an excellent Elizabeth Bennet and a convincing zombie slayer (the pentagram of death sequence from the book is an early showstopper), and her earnest (but definitely aware) performance drives the film. She spars nicely with Sam Riley's glowering Mr Darcy, whose look of constant disdain makes it hard to tell if Riley considers the whole enterprise beneath him, or if he's just really very committed. We must also mention Dance's proud and indulgent paterfamilias and Lena Headey's eye-patch-sporting legendary zombie slayer Lady Catherine De Bourgh, as both *Game Of Thrones* stars have a tremendous amount of fun.

Best of the lot, though, and the best example of the film nailing the skewed take on the original source material, is Matt Smith as the preening and deeply irritating Mr Collins. It's a hilarious performance, as he ineffectually tries to woo Lizzie, rambles endlessly about the glorious Lady Catherine, dances with gusto and demands more scones.

As for the zombies, they're decent too. Steers' script makes them a lot more interesting than your standard shufflers, as they can hide their condition for a while and can even talk. The make-up effects offer plenty of gross-out moments and Steers takes delight in exploding heads.

However, the actual plotline involving the zombies leaves a lot to be desired. There's a lot of half-baked nonsense involving factions and conspiracies that we won't go into for fear of spoilers, but the shift in focus from the P&P to the Z in the final act means that it stumbles quite badly in the end.

Pride And Prejudice And Zombies is patchy, but the laughs come with enough frequency and the cast is so game that this is a surprisingly entertaining and likeable comedy.

Jonathan Hatfull

LIZZIE BENNET, ZOMBIE SLAYER

Other classic literary heroes we'd like to see in horror

Jane Eyre
Jane Eyre has to put up with a lot in Charlotte Bronte's classic, so we'd like to see her channel her rage into monster slaying.

Emma
A Herbert West-type figure, endlessly meddling in the affairs of the undead.

Cathy Earnshaw
Wuthering Heights
Heathcliff is clearly a werewolf that this barely needs any adapting. Silver bullets, Cathy! Bad dreams in the night, indeed.

Hester Prynne
The Scarlet Letter
Having been shunned, Hester takes bloody revenge on her Puritan community, which is really Roanoke in a twist ending.

Pip
Great Expectations
Honestly, we've got nothing that trumps *South Park*'s retelling of Dickens' classic with its Genesis Device and Malcolm McDowell.

SciFiNow scored **6** for Pride And Prejudice And Zombies

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

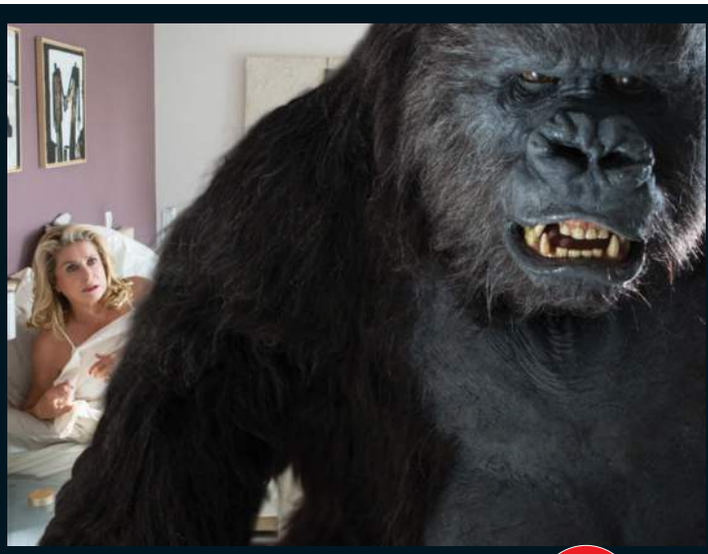
OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



The Final Girls
A group of teens are transported into a cult slasher film and must play by the rules to survive in this brilliant comedy.

TRIVIA NATALIE PORTMAN WAS ORIGINALLY ATTACHED TO STAR BUT SHE'S STILL A PRODUCER ON THE FILM.

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THE BRAND NEW TESTAMENT

SciFiNow Must see now!

A blasphemous blast

Details TBC // 113 mins // 25March **Director** Jaco Van Dormael **Screenwriters** Thomas Gunzig, Jaco Van Dormael **Cast** Pili Groyne, Benoit Poelvoorde, Catherine Deneuve **Distributor** Metrodome



A grand, gleefully silly and surprisingly tender satirical fantasy adventure that posits the question, 'what if women ruled the world?' *The Brand New Testament* is the fantastic tale of a ten-year-old girl named Ea (Pili Groyne), who when sick of her father (aka God)'s ways, decides to reboot the world by sending everyone the date of their death, escaping through the washing machine at her apartment and going on a quest through Brussels to find six new apostles.

Belgian filmmaker Jaco Van Dormael playfully brings to life Marilyn Monroe's famous words that "imperfection is beauty, madness is genius and it's better to be absolutely ridiculous than absolutely boring" with a delightful concept that is executed with style, humour and emotional intelligence. He draws together an exquisite cast, including Catherine Deneuve (*Persepolis*) as a heartbroken wife who takes a gorilla for a lover, and Marco Lorenzini (*Brotherhood Of Tears*) as a dyslexic homeless man tasked with writing the New Testament.

There's both deep poignancy and knowingness in this telling of a new world order that can perhaps be best described as *Stranger Than Fiction* meets *Dogma* via Jean-Pierre Jeunet. Surreal images such as an ostrich wandering through a supermarket or a detached hand doing ballet across the screen while chaos ensues abound. But mostly this is a story about adults full of sadness who have lost their sense of wonderment. A feeling of hope also comes from the introduction of a young boy who wants to live as a girl. Van Dormael gives the viewer a great villain who gets his comeuppance by putting an entitled, horrid rule-maker (God, played in a superbly haughty fashion by Benoit Poelvoorde) in his place by making him experience life from the other side.

Told from a bright-eyed childlike perspective through Ea's narration, this story of human connection and empathy takes on an animated and lively form that entertains and enlightens in equal measure.

Katherine McLaughlin

8 SciFiNow scored **8** for The Brand New Testament
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Micmacs
Jean-Pierre Jeunet takes down the arms industry in typically inventive and wacky style.



YAKUZA APOCALYPSE

Mega Miike madness

Details 18 // 115 mins // Out now **Director** Takashi Miike **Screenwriter** Yoshitaka Yamaguchi **Cast** Hayato Ichihara, Yayan Ruhian, Riko Narumi **Distributor** National Amusements



Takashi Miike's ludicrous work rate means that not every film of his is going to be a winner. Although his back catalogue is littered with stunners like *Audition*, *Ichi The Killer* and *The Happiness Of The Katakuris*, there's plenty of filler and disappointment too. Approaching *Yakuza Apocalypse* with caution seems wise, but fans of the director will be thrilled to hear that it's as fun as it looks.

Kageyama (Hayato Ichihara) works for the feared, respected and secretly vampiric local Yakuza boss Kamiura (relative newcomer Lily Frankie). He's not the only supernatural being around though, as evidenced when he's murdered by his former gang, including a backpack and geek-glasses-sporting fighter named Kyoken (*The Raid*'s Yayan Ruhian).

As a parting gift, Kamiura passes his vampiric gift onto Kageyama, who's going to need it if he's going to take on these evil creatures and the rest of his treacherous mob. Turning his entire neighbourhood into bloodsuckers should take care of that.



Blood-soaked, gleefully silly and action-packed, *Yakuza Apocalypse* sees Miike having a brilliant time. There are impressive fight sequences and truly bizarre baddies; the beaked turtle-goblin with toxic breath is only topped by the fuzzy frog creature with incredible martial arts skills.

There's a blend of western and gangster movies that feels almost traditional in places, but Yoshitaka Yamiguchi's script is so giddily packed with stuff that a surprised laugh is always just a few moments away. Whether it's the knitting group in a bar basement calmly but painfully paying for their crimes, whatever it is that's spurting out of the new boss' ear, or the simple joy of watching a felt-clad frog thing kick the crap out of everyone in increasingly outlandish fashion, there's never really an end to the mad delights of *Yakuza Apocalypse*.

It won't be for everyone (far from it), and you'll quickly know if you're on board, but whether you're a Miike fan or simply looking for something weird and wonderful, you certainly won't forget this in a hurry.

Jonathan Hatfull

7 SciFiNow scored **7** for Yakuza Apocalypse
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OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



The Happiness Of The Katakuris
Guests keep dying and coming back to life at a family's B&B.

TRIVIA CATHERINE DENEUVE TRANSLATED DIRECTOR JACO VAN DORMAEL'S WORDS TO THE SPANISH MAN DRESSED UP AS THE GORILLA SHE MAKES LOVE TO IN *THE BRAND NEW TESTAMENT*.

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THE 5TH WAVE

More of the same?

FILM INFO

Released
Out now

Certificate
12A

Director
J Blakeson

Screenwriters
Susannah Grant, Akiva Goldsman, Jeff Pinkner

Cast
Chloe Grace Moretz, Alex Roe, Nick Robinson, Zackary Arthur, Maika Monroe

Distributor
Sony Pictures Entertainment

Running Time
112 mins



It's a story we've seen again and again: the dystopian future has arrived. Almost everyone is dead. A lot rests in the hands of a teenager who doesn't know what they're doing. This time, the teenager is Cassie Sullivan (Chloe Grace Moretz), and the dystopian future is coming in waves. When a sort-of alien invasion – in which earthquakes, tsunamis, viruses and electromagnetic pulses have wiped out almost everyone and everything – Cassie finds herself alone and vulnerable. But after she makes a promise to her little brother, she's determined to find him no matter what.

At a glance, *The 5th Wave* looks like more of the same, and in some respects it is. It's very clearly the first of a series, the journal-style narration from Cassie is often annoying and unnecessary, and it seems to set itself up for an inevitable love triangle that will surely blossom at a later date. However, the film still manages to stand out from the cornucopia of other YA sci-fi adaptations, and its successes are largely down to the excellent Moretz in the leading role. She's like a chameleon; she effortlessly transforms into any character she's faced with. And who she's playing here is a regular teenage girl.

What's interesting is that when Cassie thinks of herself as a regular girl, she really is a regular girl. She doesn't lead a rebellion, and she's not super smart; she just gets on with it. Throughout the film, she doesn't do anything that an actual unremarkable teenager couldn't imagine themselves doing in her situation. In short, she's not special at all, but it's actually kind of refreshing.

She keeps a journal and stores creepy photos of her high-school crush between the pages. She's a bit useless with a gun, and can't tell a goody from a baddie. When out looting a petrol station in the film's very first steal, she nicks a handful of tampons, because why wouldn't you? You don't suddenly gain mad combat skills and stop getting your period just because the world is ending. A lot of other YA series don't think about these things, and it makes the rest of us look bad. Not Cassie though. It's quite easy to see yourself as Cassie.

Though *The 5th Wave* wins in some places, it fails in others. It's a well-structured story with an interesting central character and elements of excitement and intrigue, but little things often let it down, usually single shots that completely ruin the tone of a scene, like the ten seconds where Cassie hilariously almost falls over in slow motion just after dozens have been shot dead and she's trying to escape the same fate. Or the moment when she accidentally sees her on-screen love interest sensually washing his topless, glistening torso in a lake and sexy *Mills And Boon* music starts playing in the background. It almost seems like the director popped terrible off-cuts back in while putting the final edit together just to see if he could get away with it.

But even with its pitalls, it's easy to get lost in Cassie's world, and what with all the drama that kicks off towards the end, a the lack of a sequel would be disappointing.

Poppy-Jay Palmer



SciFiNow scored **6** for The 5th Wave

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

APOCALYPSE WOW

Movie end-game scenarios we'd like to live through

Zombieland (2009)

A zombie apocalypse isn't appealing unless it means hanging out with Bill Murray.



Mad Max: Fury Road (2015)

Imperator Furiosa as our new queen? Where do we sign up?



Cloudy With A Chance Of Meatballs (2009)

Food apocalypse. One big, old all-you-can-eat buffet every day!



OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



How I Live Now

A bratty American girl's life is unravelled when war breaks out while visiting her English cousins.

TRIVIA TYE SHERIDAN AND NICK ROBINSON BOTH AUDITIONED FOR THE ROLE OF BEN PARISH.

ARROWHEAD Missing the mark

Details 15 // 80 mins // 2016 // DVD // **Released** 22 February **Director** Jesse O'Brien **Cast** Christopher Kirby, Dan Mor, Shaun Micallef, Aleisha Rose **Distributor** Metrodome



Initially starting out as a promising convergence of *Firefly* and *Pitch Black*, it's a shame that *Arrowhead* quickly changes tack – for the worse, as it transpires.

Seeing prisoner of war Kye (Dan Mor) being rescued from a particularly desolate-looking penal colony, only to become stranded once again on a desolate planet by his supposed rescuers, he must battle various monsters – both literal and metaphorical – in order to survive. As it turns out, nothing is what it seems, and Kye must uncover the mystery of what's happening on the planet if he is to find a way out of his unique predicament.



Remember the time-dilation aspect of *Interstellar*? Well, that's basically the core focus of *Arrowhead*, and while it makes for a mildly intriguing sideline, it's hardly fertile ground on which to base an entire movie on.

It's a shame really, because there's a good film hidden in here somewhere, but the bulk of the film just feels like a sideline from the main plot, trapped here while waiting for the main action to start, which ultimately never arrives.

Steve Wright

SciFiNow scored **5** for Arrowhead

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

THE MARTIAN Space oddity

SciFiNow Must see now!

Details 12 // 141 mins // 2015 // Blu-ray • DVD // **Released** Out now **Director** Ridley Scott **Cast** Matt Damon, Jessica Chastain **Distributor** 20th Century Fox



For a story that is so bleak, *The Martian* sure is entertaining. Ares Three astronaut/botanist Mark Watney (Matt Damon), presumed dead, is abandoned on Mars by his crew, only to wake up and find that he's all alone with enough resources to last him just a couple of years. Low on food, he starts farming potatoes – on Mars! – while he waits to be rescued.

The concept could have easily leant itself to other genres, and turned the film – and, indeed, Andy Weir's book – into a horror or gut-wrenching drama. But Watney's immensely likeable personality, which is showcased through a series of fun video diaries filmed in the Ares base on the surface of Mars, and an amazing, disco-heavy soundtrack keep it light and breezy while also managing to remain as captivating as any lost-in-space story.



The Martian is also extremely pleasing to look at. The unique production design, the delicious autumnal (read: Martian) colour palette and the gorgeous cinematography from Daiusz Wolski effortlessly transport us to Watney's world.

Poppy-Jay Palmer

SciFiNow scored **8** for The Martian

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



DEATHGASM Bloody metal

Details 15 // 86 mins // 2015 // Blu-ray • DVD // **Released** 29 February **Director** Jason Lei Howden **Cast** Milo Cawthorne, James Blake, Kimberley Crossman, Sam Berkley **Distributor** Studiocanal



Jason Lei Howden's blend of heavy metal and heavy gore was a natural fit for the horror movie festivals it played during 2015 to a rapturous reception. There's no mistaking the sincerity of the love that Howden clearly has for both horror and metal, and they've combined for a horror comedy that's a hell of a lot of fun.

Brodie (Milo Cawthorne) is a teenage outsider struggling to survive in his brutally normal small New Zealand town. The only good thing in his life is metal, which leads him to befriend abrasive loner Zakk (James Blake), and the duo decide to form a band. They've got a great name: DEATHGASM ("All caps. Lower case is for pussies"). There's just one thing holding them back: their lack of talent. How can they become metal gods if they can't write a song?

When they break into the house of a metal giant long thought dead, they steal a book that should give them the powers of darkness. What it does is unleash the forces of evil on their town and turn everyone into bloodthirsty monsters. Can Brodie stay alive long enough to send these bastards back to hell while winning the heart of the lovely Medina (Kimberley Crossman)?



Any gory low-budget horror from New Zealand is inevitably going to get the early Peter Jackson comparison, but in the case of *Deathgasm,* it's deserved, especially when it comes to the inventive nature of the carnage. Spines are ripped out, heads are severed, and sex toys are used as deadly weapons.

It also works surprisingly well when it's showing Brodie's journey from zero to hero (I know, sorry), as he realises that Zakk might not be someone to look up to and learns to take responsibility. The rapport between Cawthorne and Blake is great, creating a friendship that carries the first half of the film. Kimberley Crossman (*Power Rangers Samurai*) also deserves praise for her performance as the popular girl who undergoes a metal awakening.

It's patchy and not all of the jokes land, but this is a good example of a film made for a specific audience by a filmmaker who counts himself among them. So if the idea of metal, splatter and slapstick appeals to you, then we definitely recommend checking this out. We had a great time.

Jonathan Hatfull

SciFiNow scored **7** for Deathgasm

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IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



All Cheerleaders Die

Cheerleaders come back to life to punish the jocks who killed them in this smart horror comedy.

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Written and directed by Christopher Butler, and starring Joanna Ignaczewska, Louis Labovitch, Akira Koieyama and Jessica Kay, *The Scopia Effect* sees reincarnation going horribly wrong, causing glitches to echo through reality. Through hypnosis, Basia (Ignaczewska) opens up parts of her mind that should never be accessed, releasing a dark energy. The lines between her past lives start to blur, upsetting the balance of her very existence. Her reality becomes increasingly unstable as she battles to hang onto what is real.



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EVILSPEAK

SciFiNow Must see now!

Here, piggy piggy piggy...

Details 18 // 95 mins // 1981 // BD • DVD // **Released** Out now **Director** Eric Weston
Cast Clint Howard, RG Armstrong, Joseph Cortese, Claude Earl Jones, Don Stark
Distributor 88 Films



So-called 'video nasties' inevitably come with a weight of expectation for them to be shocking, schlocky pieces of celluloid. The last thing you anticipate is for them to actually be quite good, as is the case here with *Evilspeak*.

Having been one of the victims of the 1984 Video Recordings Act, mainly due to the excess gore (which isn't really that bad by today's standards, aside from one instance of a young woman being eaten alive by a horde of rabid pigs in a shower) and the heavily satanic themes, it's nice to see the film in its fully restored and uncut form. Those expecting to be shocked, however, almost certainly won't be – especially if you've seen Brian DePalma's take on Stephen King's *Carrie*, which this shares a lot of similarities with.

Indeed, the only real differences are superficial: the lead is gender-swapped, here being the orphaned, awkward, bullied and generally shat-upon military school pupil Stanley Coopersmith (Clint Howard), who stumbles across a book authored by a Dark-Age satanic leader. As he translates the book's messages, evil starts to take root, and Coopersmith seizes the opportunity for revenge on his sadistic, bullying classmates and uncaring teachers.

Evilspeak is as on the nose as it's possible to get with its premonitions and symbolism. The frequently flashing computer screen might as well have 'Something is not right here' written all over it, and right from the very first moment the horde of pigs waddle onto the screen (incidentally, why would you need them in a military school?), you know something horrible will end up happening. Coupled with its scathing portrayal of Christianity, and it becomes clear that it is a film with something to say, and isn't afraid of saying it.

The inevitably bloody climax is signposted from the off – although with the absence of even one sympathetic character in the melee (Coopersmith's sole friend is absent here), there's no real tension – you're just waiting for his tormentors to be picked off in deservedly horrible ways.

So *Evilspeak* doesn't exactly reinvent the wheel, but it isn't attempting to; it's simply a fun throwback to a bygone age of horror filmmaking, and one you should definitely pick up.

Steve Wright



8 SciFiNow scored **8** for Evilspeak
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Carrie
Would make a great double bill. Indeed, Coopersmith and Carrie should take on the world...

THE HOUSE ON PINE STREET

This is not my beautiful house

Details 15 // 111 mins // 2015 // DVD // **Released** Out now **Directors** Aaron Keeling, Austin Keeling **Cast** Emily Goss, Taylor Bottles, Cathy Barnett **Distributor** Second Sight



The haunted house movie gets a bit of a twist with this slow-burn from Aaron and Austin Keeling. The film finds heavily pregnant Jennifer (Emily Goss) reluctantly relocated from Chicago to their hometown suburb by her husband (Taylor Bottles). They got a good deal on their new place, but is there an unquiet spirit, or is Jennifer just freaking out?

The House On Pine Street wears its influences on its sleeve, but to the filmmakers' credit, many of the more obvious nods are red herrings rather than simple steals. That grab-bag also makes it harder to second-guess; should we be paying attention to the *Rosemary's Baby*-esque stares of Jennifer's party guests or the self-deprecating medium who thinks he might have noticed something?



However, it is all very slow and much too long. Goss gives a very strong lead turn, but some of the supporting performances don't match up, which all contributes to the feeling of wishing that the film would just get on with it. Still, the final revelation is satisfying and there's real promise here.

Jonathan Hatfull

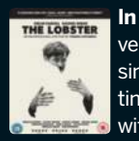
6 SciFiNow scored **6** for The House On Pine Street
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

THE LOBSTER

SciFiNow Must see now!

Cooked to perfection

Details 15 // 118 mins // 2015 // BD • DVD // **Released** Out now **Director** Yorgos Lanthimos **Cast** Colin Farrell, Rachel Weisz **Distributor** Picturehouse Entertainment



In a dystopian future very similar to now, single people have a set time limit to couple up with another human partner with similar distinguishing features, or else they are turned into animals, giving them another chance to find true love, or forced to live in the wild in colonies of loners, waiting to be captured and turned into animals anyway.

You'd be forgiven for thinking *The Lobster* was a cute, cosy romance about finding love – the film's marketing campaign has had a quality of art house adorableness to it – but you'd also be very mistaken.



It's probably one of director Yorgos Lanthimos' lighter films, but it's still tremendously sinister. It's tender in places and downright bleak in others, but the mixture is wonderfully balanced to create an absolute gem of a film.

An understated central performance from Colin Farrell (*Total Recall*) leads a cast of intriguing characters that range from strange but sweet to truly monstrous. Thimios Bakatakis' cinematography is frequently delicious, and the string-heavy score is always perfect.

Poppy-Jay Palmer

10 SciFiNow scored **10** for The Lobster
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

TRIVIA ANTON LA VEY, THE FOUNDER OF THE CHURCH OF SATAN, WAS A BIG FAN OF *EVILSPEAK*.

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LAST SHIFT
I saw the devil

Details 15 // 90 mins // 2014 // DVD // **Released** Out now **Director** Anthony DiBlasi
Cast Juliana Harkavy, Joshua Mikel, J LaRose, Natalie Victoria **Distributor** Matchbox Films



The prolific Anthony DiBlasi returns with this Satanic riff on John Carpenter's *Assault On Precinct 13*, which would make a good double bill with Bryan O'Malley's *Let Us Prey*. The director of *Dread* and *Missionary* strands lone rookie cop Jessica (Juliana Harkavy) in an empty police station that's technically closed, but needs to remain occupied until the morning. It's all quiet apart from a hulking hobo (J LaRose) and a chatty waif (Natalie Victoria), but she quickly realises that the spirit of a cult leader and his victims might be hanging around.

There's a reason why filmmakers keep coming back to Carpenter's classic: it works. DiBlasi doesn't have to work too hard to put us on edge as Jessica keeps investigating strange noises and answering phone calls from a distressed woman. Joshua Mikel is decidedly unnerving as the evil Paymon, who becomes more of a presence throughout with his disciples (the excellent Sarah Sculco and Kathryn Kilger). It doesn't stick the landing but this is very creepy stuff, with strong performances and some great scares.

Jonathan Hatfull

7 SciFiNow scored **7** for Last Shift
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



MARK OF THE WITCH
Devil's daughter

Details 15 // 80 mins // 2014 // DVD // **Released** 15 February **Director** Jason Bognacki
Cast Paulie Redding, David Landy, Maria Olsen **Distributor** Metrodome



FrightFest-ers may remember *Mark Of The Witch* from its 2014 showing, where it was titled *Another*.

Jason Bognacki's film stars Paulie Rojas (*Crimson Winter*) as Jordyn, who descends into an Argento-inspired nightmare as a dark force seems determined to wreak havoc in her life and take possession of her soul.

Bognacki is clearly influenced by the deliberately non-sensical dream logic of Argento's magic-infused horrors, as Jordyn begins to lose track of what is real and what is not. There are two forces competing for her soul, but will the dark witch (Maria Olsen) and her evil powers claim the 18 year old, or will her Christian aunt (Nancy Wolfe) help her save herself?

None of this is particularly important; it's best to just go with it and enjoy the excellent cinematography and the sheer madness of it all. This is quite clearly not for everyone, but it moves at a cracking pace through its 80 minutes and although it's often clunky and ludicrous, we recommend that you sit back and let this deeply strange but decidedly entertaining film take you along with it.

Jonathan Hatfull



7 SciFiNow scored **7** for Mark Of The Witch
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

FRIGHTFEST PRESENTS
Indie horror pick 'n' mix

Details Various // Various mins // 2016 // Digital Download // **Released** 29 February/ 7 March **Director** Ruth Platt, Benjamin Moody, Levan Bakhia, Jaron Henrie-McCrea
Cast Various **Distributor** Icon

Following their first batch of selected indie titles, the FrightFest gang has assembled another batch of horrors from their excellent 2015 festival for digital download.

Platt's *The Lesson* may sound like a grimy combination of torture porn and hoodie horror, as a teacher kidnaps two teens and puts them through a grisly after-hours tutor session, but it's cleverer than it looks. Platt doesn't shy away from showing their bad behaviour, but she's careful in showing Fin's (Evan Bendall) circumstances and points to a wider sense of disaffection and hatred.

Moody's *Last Girl Standing* is also nifty. Camryn (Akasha Villalobos) survives a massacre and kills her attacker, but she's traumatised and struggling to get by. When life seems to be looking up, a familiar face reappears. This debut owes a heavy debt to Adam Wingard's *A Horrible Way To Die*, but has a strong personality of its own, a strong script and has an excellent central performance. It's a shame that the ending tips into schlock.

Levan Bakhia's Georgian-set *Landmine Goes Click* was hyped as an audience-splitter and, to be honest, we didn't walk out as fans. An American tourist is left standing on a landmine while a hunter threatens the girl who refuses to leave him, and while the misogyny of the characters may not make it a misogynist film, there's not really enough going on beneath the surface to make it worthwhile.

Finally, Jaron Henri-McCrea's *Curtain* is a different beast entirely, an odd tale of a young woman who moves into an apartment where shower curtains keep getting sucked through a portal in the bathroom wall. It doesn't quite all come together but there's a lot of imagination, the performances are strong, and it's got a wonderfully odd sense of humour. Great if you're looking for something a little different.

Jonathan Hatfull



6 SciFiNow scored **6** for The Lesson
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



7 SciFiNow scored **7** for Last Girl Standing
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

7 SciFiNow scored **7** for Curtain
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



4 SciFiNow scored **4** for Landmine Goes Click
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

TRIVIA THE NEXT TWO TITLES IN FRIGHTFEST PRESENTS ARE *EMELIE* AND *THE UNFOLDING*

FROM OTHER WORLDS Amblin along

Details 12 // 88 mins // 2004 // DVD // **Released** Out now **Director** Barry Strugatz
Cast Cara Buono, Isaach De Bankole, Jay Oakerson **Distributor** Simply Media



Having been made way back in 2004, there's an obvious reason from the very start as to why *From Other Worlds* seems so dated, aside from its low budget. Not that this is the sole explanation for the sense of unease that pervades the film.

Director Barry Strugatz for the most part successfully straddles the line between *Close Encounters*-esque discovery tale and sci-fi spoof. Spaced-out housewife Joanne (Cara Buono) claims to have been abducted, and subsequently abandons her peaceful yet unsatisfying existence, much to the bafflement of her husband Brian (David Lansbury), all the while she tries to discover the truth about what happened to her – a journey that takes us to the limits of our understanding of the universe, and possibly beyond.

Even though it's ultimately engaging, at first it's hard to get into. It wears its Amblin influences on its sleeve, yet despite being marketed as a comedy, for the first hour at least there are few laughs to be had, relying on its viewers' kinship with sci-fi greats to glean knowing laughs.

In other words, arch-fans of optimistic forward-looking Eighties genre classics are its target audience. It's a narrow one, but it'll undoubtedly find a home there.
Steve Wright

6 SciFiNow scored **6** for From Other Worlds
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



DRAGON BALL Z RESURRECTION F Frieza strikes back

Details 12 // 93 mins // 2015 // Blu-ray • DVD // **Released** Out now **Director** Tadayoshi Yamamuro **Cast** Masako Nozawa, Ryô Horikawa, Hiromi Tsuru
Distributor Manga Entertainment



With the original *Dragon Ball Z* series having long slowed down, it's great to see it continue in feature-film format. The only real difference is that the multiple episode-long battles have been slowed down.

Seeing the resurrected warlord Frieza journey to Earth to take his revenge on those who defeated him (namely Goku), the Z fighters gather to face him, attempting to buy time before Goku and Vegeta arrive back from their sojurn training with the god-like Whis.

For *Dragon Ball* fans, it's more of the same on a bigger scale. For the most this works (even if the CGI feels slightly jarring), with the battles retaining their frenetic style, even if the ending is never really in any doubt. Then again, that's not why you watch it; it's always a case of seeing just how bad things can get for the good guys before it is all put right again.

But it's hard to shake the feeling that this is filler. Nothing of consequence happens, and for Frieza's formidable reputation, his return is an anti climax. Still, fans will undoubtedly find a lot to enjoy here.
Steve Wright

7 SciFiNow scored **7** for Dragon Ball Z Resurrection F
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



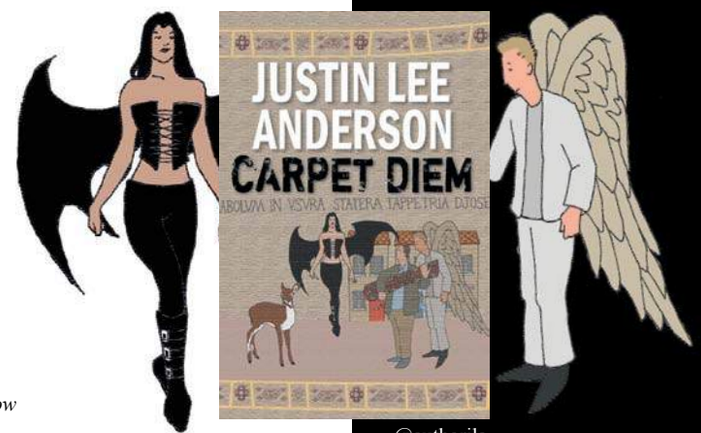
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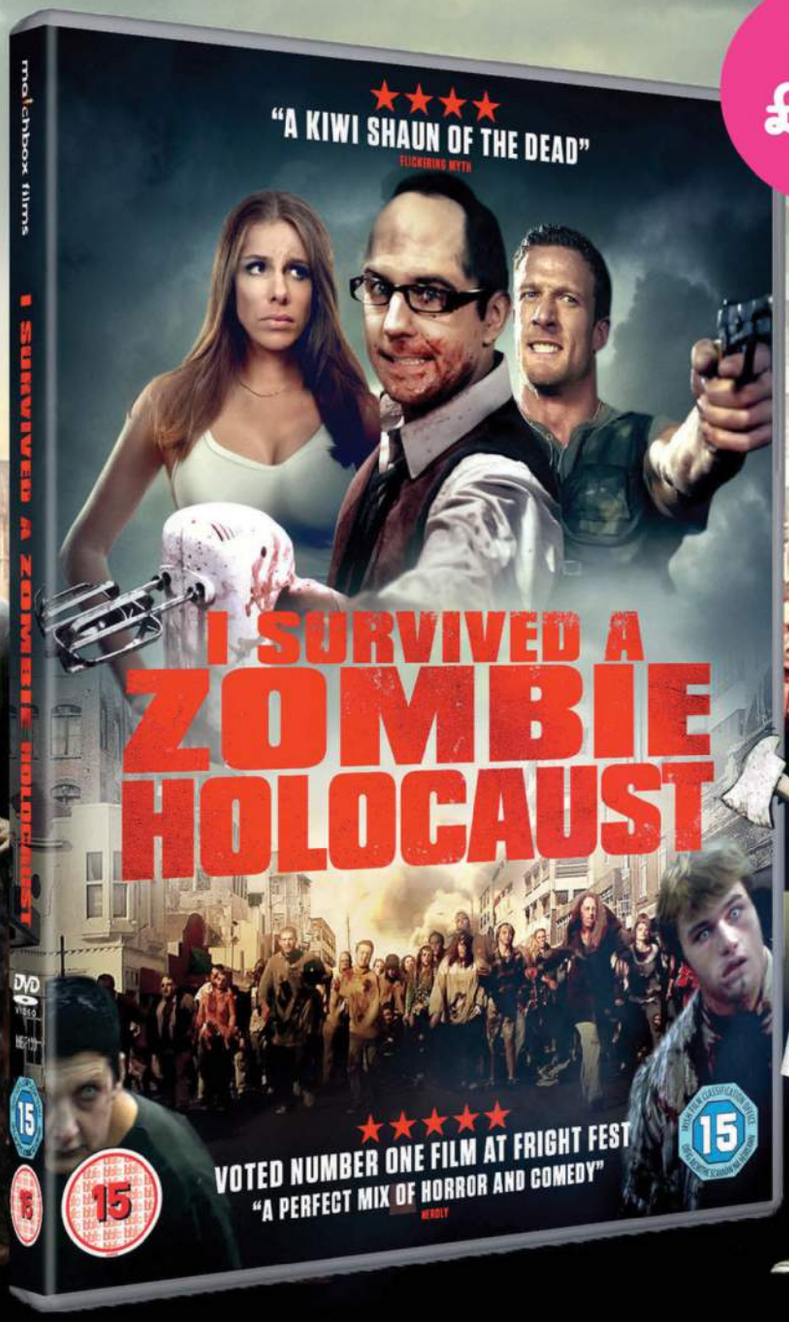
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FILM INFO

Released
14 March
Year Made
2015
Certificate
18
Creators
David Benioff, DB Weiss
Cast
Peter Dinklage, Emilia Clarke, Kit Harington, Lena Headey, Nikolaj Coster-Waldau, Maisie Williams
Distributor
Warner Home Video
Running Time
600 mins
Format
Blu-ray · DVD



WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The biggest Season Five cliffhangers



RIP Jon Snow
They wouldn't kill him off, surely? Okay, so *Game Of Thrones* has prior form for offing main characters, but with his fate in the books less than ambiguous, we suspect this isn't the last we've seen of the poor Bastard.



Sansa and Theon's leap of faith
Theon finally grew some balls (not literally) and made off with Sansa. However, his escape plan (jumping off a high wall surrounded by open ground, with an army literally within spitting distance) might not be the best one.



Daenerys vs Dothraki
The Khaleesi's reign came to an abrupt end when she was forced to wing it on the back of Drogon – only to end up surrounded by a Dothraki horde. She has a dragon, but he's tired and injured. We have to say, we're worried about her.



Season Five

GAME OF THRONES

All men must die... eventually

Even the best shows stumble occasionally, as *Game Of Thrones* proved this season with its fifth season. Having said goodbye to some fan-favourite characters (so long, Oberyn Martell and Tywin Lannister), and lacking the input of writer George RR Martin as he concentrated on finishing off sixth book *The Winds Of Winter*, the show inevitably suffered slightly.

Essentially, the focal point for a number of characters is the use – and subsequent misuse – of power. Cersei (Lena Headey) effectively rules Westeros now, but proves to be a less than efficient ruler, prey to the influence of religious fanatic the High Sparrow (Jonathan Pryce); Jon (Kit Harington), the newly anointed head of the Night's Watch, has to balance placating king-in-residence Stannis (Stephen Dillane) with guarding the Wall, despite the fact that many of his own men want him dead, and Daenerys (Emilia Clarke) continues to discover that ruling a city is harder than it looks. Meanwhile, the likes of Tyrion (Peter Dinklage) and Arya (Maisie Williams) must decamp across the world as they start again from scratch, while Sansa (Sophie Turner) finds that she might have jumped out of one frying pan and into another.



In truth, we've barely scratched the surface of what goes on in Season Five. There are more characters and plot threads than ever – only now, you get the sense that there might be simply too much going on for the writers to devote enough time to everyone. Even with the benching of Bran Stark this year, some characters go whole episodes without being mentioned, leaving the viewer with the occasionally thankless task of picking up where things left off, not helped by the fact that for at least the first half of the season, there's nothing truly memorable in the vein of events like the Battle of the Blackwater or the Red and Purple Weddings.

And that's before we've even touched on some of the more troubling aspects of the show, namely the poorly judged treatment of Sansa Stark at the hands of the sadistic Ramsay Snow (Iwan Rheon), all the while her emasculated former childhood friend Theon (Alfie Allen) is forced to watch. For a character who's already suffered enough, it seems a pointless way to pile on the misery, especially considering it's not something that happens to her in the book. Coupled with the borderline redundant introduction of characters like the Sand Snakes (who seem to be there solely to look seductive and reveal flesh), and you get the sense that the narrative sleight of hand that graced previous seasons is sorely lacking.

Thankfully, things pick up by the second half of the season. Having been teased for a while now, Daenerys and Tyrion's meeting in 'Hardhome' proves to be the coming together of minds that we'd been hoping for. In the same episode, the heroic but doomed attempt by the Night's Watch to rescue the Wildlings at their base is a different – but just as epic – spectacle as previous skirmishes, stylistically unlike anything seen in the show before. If you were still disillusioned at this point then it's moments like this that restore your faith.

Factor in a number of cliffhanger (is Jon alive? What will happen to Daenerys, Sansa and Theon?), and the show certainly fulfils its remit of making you want to watch the next series, even if the episodes before it are of varying quality. In truth though, even a middling *Game Of Thrones* series is better than much of what's on TV, with Season Five proving to be a case in point.

Steve Wright

SciFiNow scored **7** for
Game Of Thrones Season Five
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



The Shannara Chronicles
When the new MTV show arrives on UK shores, this could prove to be a great fantasy-based alternative.

TRIVIA NO *GAME OF THRONES* CHARACTER HAS APPEARED IN EVERY EPISODE.

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Season Three

DEFIANCE Game over

Details 15 // 546 mins // Blu-ray • DVD // Out now **Creators** Kevin Murphy, Rockne S O'Bannon, Michael Taylor **Cast** Grant Bowler, Julie Benz, Stephanie Leonidas, Tony Curran, Jaime Murray **Distributor** Universal Pictures UK



The demise of *Defiance* after three years was surely not the end result Syfy was looking for from its expensive investment. Yet, it's not really surprising, as the third season offers good reasons to conclude that this was not the ideal show on which to build a multimedia franchise.

For one thing, *Defiance* is another series that focuses on people constantly fighting for survival after an apocalyptic event. Emphasising this is a brutal premiere that introduces the season's main antagonists: a genocidal Votan military extremist and a race of aliens that relish pleasures of the flesh in every sense. Both are credible threats thanks to top performances by Lee Tergesen as the nutty general and Conrad Coates as the aliens' imposing leader. Their extraterrestrial origins, however, draw unhelpful parallels with *Falling Skies*. Moreover, both groups are shown committing horrific acts that wouldn't look amiss on *The Walking Dead*.

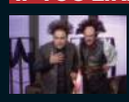
The fact that danger comes from extraneous sources again this season also points to a more fundamental problem. The town of Defiance isn't just a home for the show's principal characters; it's a symbol at the heart of the series' mythology. The importance of collective responsibility is reiterated throughout this season when characters find themselves weighing personal interests against the survival of the community. Because everyone is expected to put Defiance first, it stands to reason that the show will keep re-treading the same ground.

In what amounts to a modest reboot, several recurring characters are killed off in the season opener. Wisely, these don't include Doc Yewll (Trenna Keating) whose sarcastic wit never gets old, or Datak Tarr (Tony Curran), whose ordeal this season should see him go down as one of sci-fi's most sympathetic bad guys. Oddly though, *Defiance*'s established characters aren't given the opportunity to grow through the arrival of new faces. This only reinforces the impression that Syfy's bold experiment has run its course, which is a shame for a show with so much potential.

Michael Simpson

SciFiNow scored **7** for Defiance Season Three
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Babylon 5
With its brilliant multi-season story arc, this show proved that inter-alien politics could be cool.



Series One

TRIPPED Time jinks

Details 15 // 240 mins // DVD // Out now **Creator** Jamie Mathieson **Cast** Blake Harrison, George Webster, Georgina Campbell **Distributor** ITV Studios Home Entertainment



Having begun life as doomed to never be seen pilot *ALT*, this time-bending alternate-reality drama was reborn anew as *Tripped*, combining an all-new cast with the exact same focus. While we'll never know if the result is an improvement on its origins, it's clear that it isn't as good as it could have been.

Seeing two childhood best friends, the soon-to-be-wed Danny (Blake Harrison) and stoner layabout Milo (George Webster) tumbling through time and space after accidentally laying hands on a trans-dimensional teleporter, the results are extremely hit and miss to say the least. While the buddy dynamic between Harrison and Webster is spot on, and Georgina Campbell (*Murdered By My Boyfriend*) is always great as Danny's fiancé Kate, you get the feeling that the premise doesn't get stretched as far as it could have been.

Although the final twist is a novel one, *Tripped* is a show that doesn't make the most of the creativeness of its own premise. The majority of the realities that are visited aren't particularly interesting, save for the odd alteration, and at just four episodes, there is nowhere near enough time to get to know the characters. There's the occasional funny set piece and amusing gag, and some of the alternate versions of the protagonists are good value for money (Harrison's insane stalker fan is memorably creepy, for one), but for the most part the writing is too often tepid and uninspired.



There are certainly all the elements of a good story here, they just fail to coalesce into a satisfying whole. There's something inherently relatable in the personalities of Danny and Milo, two friends who have grown apart over time, a fact they can't both accept. Moreover, it's intriguing food for thought when considering how a past decision may or may not have impacted your life – hint, it's not always how you imagined it.

Ultimately, *Tripped* is a show that doesn't live up to the potential offered by its own premise. If it gets a second series then maybe it'll get that chance, but for now, it's a bit of a disappointment.

Steve Wright

SciFiNow scored **5** for Tripped Series One
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



12 Monkeys
The TV series isn't as good as the film, but succeeds nonetheless and is well worth a watch.

TRIVIA ORIGINAL *PRIMEVAL* STAR JAMES MURRAY RETURNS AS NILES POTTINGER IN THIS SEASON OF *DEFIANCE* IN THE EPISODE 'DEAD AIR'.



Season Two

EXTANT

Life interrupted

Details 12 // 540 mins // 2015 // Blu-ray // DVD // Out now **Creator** Mickey Fisher
Cast Halle Berry, Jeffrey Dean Morgan, David Morrissey, Pierce Gagnon, Grace Gummer
Distributor Universal Pictures UK



It was obvious that Season Two of *Extant* would have a different vibe when the first thing we saw was Halle Berry bonking in the shower. Coming after the show was reconceived to boost ratings, this immediately suggested that the series had been sexed up after its sterile first season. Sure enough, there's more passion, but largely not of the T&A type. Moreover, this second and final season does a much better job of meshing the show's multiple themes in thought-provoking ways.

The story resumes six months after the end of Season One with astronaut Molly Woods (Berry) in a psychiatric hospital. Thanks to the Cloud, her android son Ethan (Pierce Gagnon) is also back despite sacrificing himself to save the planet from alien spores in the first season's finale. Now though, he's in the care of his co-creator Julie Gelineau (Grace Gummer). Meanwhile, the government has taken over the Humanics robot project and is adapting it to counter the extraterrestrial threat.



In explaining these changes, the season premiere retires major characters in ways that won't please all fans. The reboot feels clumsy at times too, without foreknowledge about what's to come. It pays off, however, as the new circumstances lead the principal characters into ethical dilemmas that make it impossible to single out heroes and villains. This is especially true for Gelineau and newcomer Tobias Shepherd, played by David Morrissey. Both find themselves in invidious positions, but good writing ensures that you'll root for them in the end.

Also new this season is Jeffrey Dean Morgan's grizzled private cop, JD Richter. With a broken marriage and tainted military record, Richter is a familiar antihero. Yet, his relationship with Molly develops gradually in a way that's at odds with the notion that this season relies on sex and action.

Yes, Season Two makes concessions to mass appeal. Nonetheless, these make *Extant* more alive in ways it might have benefitted from had they been there from the start.

Michael Simpson

SciFiNow scored **7** for Extant Season Two

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Falling Skies
Aliens invade in force in this apocalyptic drama that gets better with each of its five seasons.



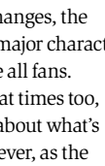
The Complete Series

SciFiNow Must see now!

NIGHT GALLERY

To be considered

Details 12 // 1,931 mins // 1970-73 // DVD // Out now **Creator** Rod Serling **Cast** Various
Distributor Fabulous Films



Night Gallery often takes second place to Rod Serling's most celebrated creation, *The Twilight Zone*, but his horror anthology series boasts more than enough grim chills and outrageous thrills to stand on its own two feet, even if each of those appendages belongs to a different person.

The concept was Serling's, but his decision to relinquish creative control over the series led to the notable split in its personality. On the one hand, you have the classic Serling formula of political and social commentary stirred into high-concept cautionary tales, and on the other you have showrunner Jack Laird's wacky comedy stories.

So while the first season is almost entirely written by Serling, by the second season *Night Gallery*'s goofy sense of humour makes itself known, and by the third you get the sense that he started to resent it.

Anthology series are hit-and-miss by their very nature, but *Night Gallery*'s schizophrenia makes that more apparent, and somehow endearing. There's no question that it's odd, for example, to follow Serling's apocalyptic 'The Boy Who Predicted Earthquakes' with a Laird's short about Dracula trying to find a babysitter, but it does somehow add to *Night Gallery*'s unique charm.

It's important to note that Laird did contribute some good work, as did the many other writers, and Serling's original episodes frequently see the writer at the very top of his game. Adapting classics gave the show some of its best moments, like the beautiful Orson Welles-narrated take on 'Secret Snow, Silent Snow' or the grisly Lovecraft-inspired 'Cool Air'. Indeed, *Night Gallery* relishes how far it can go, with Season Two episode 'The Caterpillar' proving to be a gruesome highlight.

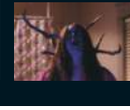
The cast is an amazing pick 'n' mix that includes talent as varied as Vincent Price, David Carradine, Laurence Harvey, Yapphet Kotto, Diane Keaton, Sally Field, Bobby Darin, Elsa Lanchester and Leslie Nielsen. There's plenty that doesn't work, but so much more that does. We recommend that you accept the invitation to the *Night Gallery*.

Jonathan Hatfull

SciFiNow scored **8** for Night Gallery: The Complete Series

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



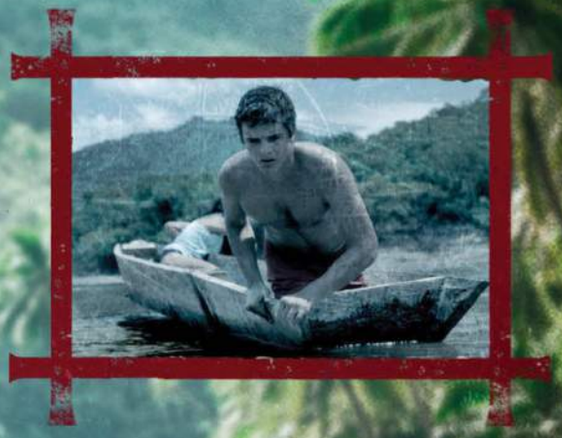
Masters Of Horror
Genre titans take on the short-form format with sometimes brilliant and occasionally naff results.

TRIVIA A YOUNG STEVEN SPIELBERG DIRECTED TWO *NIGHT GALLERY* SEGMENTS.

"A MARIO BAVA STYLE BLOODBATH WHICH BRINGS SOMETHING NEW TO THE TEENS-IN-PERIL GENRE"
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STAR WARS RISK

Publisher: Hasbro Gaming // Players: 2-4 // RRP: £49.99 (£34.99 standard version)

The first thing we should mention is that this is not a traditional *Risk* game. It may share ideas with the original classic, but it's different in its execution. The second is that two versions exist: the one featured here is the deluxe *Black Series*, which uses lovely plastic models; the cheaper coloured box version uses cardboard pieces.

Although this isn't traditional *Risk*, *Star Wars Risk* is still an excellent strategy game, although oddly it's based on *Return Of The Jedi*, rather than the recently released *The Force Awakens*. It's a minor quibble though, as it's the actual gameplay that's important.

The goal of *Star Wars Risk* is relatively simple. If you're the Empire, you must try to defeat the assembled Rebel armada, while the Rebels must destroy the Death Star. What makes it different is that three battles are happening all at the same time. The main battle takes place in space, and a second battle plays out on the moon of Endor, while Luke and Darth Vader fight on the Death Star. It's a great mechanic that was last used in Hasbro's *Star Wars: The Queen's Gambit*.

1 BOARD
The cool TIE Fighter-inspired board is divided into three areas: space, the moon of Endor and the Death Star.

2 MODELS
The models are of a high quality, with the Death Star, Star Destroyer and Millennium Falcon being the most detailed.

6 REBEL SHIPS
You have X-Wings, B-Wings and Y-Wings. Sadly, they all handle exactly the same, having no unique abilities.

3 FLEET MARKERS
The Death Star must destroy the fleet before it can concentrate on the remaining ships. Any fighters on these cards are also destroyed.

4 DICE
Dice are used to settle combat or reach the shield generator. You typically need to roll a specific number to do damage.

5 TIE FIGHTERS
You can deploy additional TIE-Fighters as long as the Star Destroyer remains. Once it's destroyed you lose everything.

Each player has an Order deck, and they start the game by drawing six cards from it. At the beginning of a round, the player selects three of those cards to play in the upcoming round. Every card has two or three icons on it that represent different moves you can make. You may wish to move your X-Wings to a new space (firing at anything adjacent to them), try to make your way to the shield generator on Endor, attempt to fight Darth Vader or pull off countless other options. The Empire has similar moves, although it has the advantage of a giant Star Destroyer, which can deploy additional TIE Fighters, and the Death Star itself, which can blow up incoming fleets.

Although there's a lot going on, it never becomes too complex, offering you endless decisions that constantly change the ebb and flow of the game. It also brilliantly captures the atmosphere of the original movie, making it a must play for any hardcore *Star Wars* fans.

While the gameplay is relatively straightforward, it remains challenging and varied enough that it will appeal to all ages. In fact, it's such a solid strategy game that even those who don't care for the Force will glean enjoyment from it. It's a superb game, even if it does need a less misleading title.

BEST FOR: STRATEGY FANS

7 TOKENS
Tokens are used to track damage on Luke Skywalker, Darth Vader, the Millennium Falcon and the Executioner Star Destroyer.



8 ORDER CARDS
Every player has a deck and plays three cards each turn. The cards' icons represent different choices, from attacking Luke with the Emperor to disabling the shield generator.

TOP FIVE

MAGIC: THE GATHERING – COMMANDER 2015



1. BLADE OF SELVES £13



2. MYSTIC CONFLUENCE £10



3. COMMAND BEACON £7



4. BLACK MARKET £6



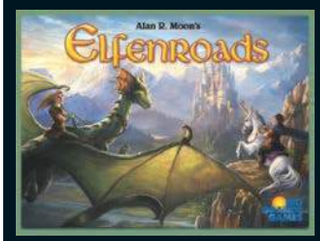
5. KARLOV OF THE GHOST COUNCIL £3

Elfenroads

Publisher: Amigo // **Players:** 2-6 // **RRP:** £54.99

Alan R Moon's *Ticket To Ride* is widely considered to be one of the best gateway board games around. It's perhaps unsurprising to learn that his follow-up, *Elfenroads*, plays very similarly to it. The key difference is that instead of planning train routes you're travelling through a magical Elven forest. Along the way you must visit as many different towns and cities as possible to give you the edge over the other competing players.

Unfortunately for the competing Elves, some of the areas are quite remote, so they must use different transport, from giant pigs to magic clouds and dragons in order to reach them. Movement is achieved by playing travel cards, and certain types of transport are far more suitable than others. Players also use Travel Counters to try and earn tactical advantages. After three rounds, whoever has visited the most locations wins.



In addition to the award-winning *Elfenlands*, *Elfenroads* includes Elfengold and Elfensea, which are both played separately to each other. Elfengold shakes things up by adding gold, which can be used to bid on Travel Counters and makes the game far more competitive. Elfensea, on the other hand, is more water-based (it uses a completely different board) and features a variety of additional modes of transport, including whales.

Both expansions build nicely on the original classic, making this an essential collection game for anyone who is new to the genre.

BEST FOR: BEGINNERS

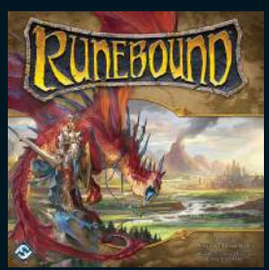
Runebound

Publisher: Fantasy Flight Games // **Players:** 2-4 // **RRP:** £49.99

Fans of *Talisman* may be interested in this fantasy romp, as it features many similar tropes and mechanics. The aim of *Runebound* is simple: power up your character with numerous magical items and special abilities until it's powerful enough to defeat one of two evil villains. While every player is working towards the same goal, and all lose if certain events are triggered, only one actual player can go on to win, making *Runebound* a semi-cooperative game.

As the players move around the board (by rolling unique terrain dice) they encounter various monsters, visit towns and cities and even trade and challenge each other. There are a number of options, which offers plenty of choice, but may intimidate newer gamers.

Unlike previous versions of the game, this third edition attempts to make *Runebound* more sociable by giving other players things to do during each person's go, whether it's rolling dice for monsters or sorting out rules. It's a nice touch, but still makes *Runebound* feel a little clunky and old fashioned. It's long too, taking a good two to three hours to complete. *Runebound* is an entertaining adventure, but the sheer amount of rules and complicated gameplay means it's not suited to beginners.



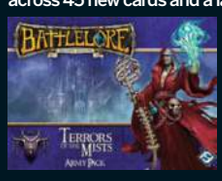
BEST FOR: HARDCORE GAMERS

Expansion Of The Month

BATTLELORE: TERROR OF THE MISTS

Publisher: Fantasy Flight Games // **Players:** 2 // **RRP:** £32.99

Terrors Of The Mist might seem pricey, but you get value for you money. It benefits from 36 beautifully sculptured figures, which are incredibly detailed and up to Fantasy Flight's usual high standards. Consisting of a selection of undead warriors and their banshee leader, they have a solid range of abilities, representing ground troops, archers and cavalry. Their powerful abilities are spread across 45 new cards and a large number of new terrain tiles, giving these terrors excellent advantages in battle. It is a great addition to *Battlelore*.



Do You Remember?

BLOOD BOWL: DEATH ZONE

Clash Of The Titans without the annoying owl

Death Zone was the second expansion for the third edition of *Blood Bowl* and was first released in 1994. Although it didn't introduce any new teams, it still added a raft of new content, such as 18 new Star Players that included Grashnak Blackhooh, a Minotaur Blocker and the Chaos Dwarf Zzharg Madeye. It enhanced the ability of foul play by adding an additional 44 Dirty Trick cards, and also comprised a host of new magical items and event cards to enhance play. Add in unique Special Play cards and five powerful secret weapons that would give any team using them an insane advantage on the field, and *Death Zone* became essential for any *Blood Bowl* fan.



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5 APPS YOU MUST DOWNLOAD RIGHT NOW

Our pick of the best this month

CUT THE ROPE: MAGIC

FOR: IOS/ANDROID
PRICE: £0.79/$0.99



1 If you loved *Cut The Rope* then you're going to adore its sequel, *Cut The Rope: Magic*. There are wizards to fight and stolen candy to retrieve as you join the adorable Om Nom on his quest. The original was brilliant, but the follow-up is better: new graphics, sound effects, gameplay elements, the ability to transform Om Nom into a variety of creatures, and exciting boss levels. Everything is so colourful, squishy, adorable and sugar-fuelled that you could just die.

BEST FOR: CANDY CRUNCHERS



BADLAND 2

FOR: IOS
PRICE: £3.99/$4.99



2 *Badland* is back, and it's bigger and better than ever. This side-scrolling adventure game takes all the magic of the first and doubles it. Now, you can scroll further, take on more elements (including liquids, flamethrowers, frost, magma, water and volumetric burning light) and marvel at how stunning the new graphics are. The price tag is a little hefty, but you get what you pay for and then some. It's only available for iOS currently; coming to Android soon.

BEST FOR: SEQUEL SUCKERS





INTO THE DIM

FOR: IOS
PRICE: FREE



3 For a horror-based game, *Into The Dim* sure is cute – at first glance, anyway. This rogue-like dungeon-crawler RPG seems like a walk in the park, but it's far from that. There are enemies to fight, tricky puzzles to crack and beasties hiding behind every corner as you venture through a darkened dungeon. People who grew up glued to the olive-green screens of their Game Boys will find *Into The Dim* a charming blast from the past.

BEST FOR: NINETIES GAMERS



DEVOURING STARS

FOR: IOS
PRICE: £4.99/$3.99



4 Have you wished for the abilities of a tribe of godlike entities, of swallowing up space starfields and creating dynamic protective nebulae? Well now you can! Virtually, at least. This updated version of *Devouring Stars* features a unique display system, 15 advanced entities to unlock, thousands of different settings through generated scenarios and more. It makes it very easy to get sucked into a black hole of gaming that you'll never be able to escape from.

BEST FOR: STARS IN THE MAKING





MAGIC: THE GATHERING – PUZZLE QUEST

FOR: IOS
PRICE: £4.99/$3.99



5 *Magic: The Gathering Puzzle Quest* takes the magic of the original card game and beautifully injects it into a thrilling spin-off app. Play online, challenge your friends and build a powerful deck that will send you to the top of the leader boards. When your *Magic: The Gathering* fingers are itching to get back in the game, all you have to do is reach for your phone.

BEST FOR: MAGIC ADDICTS





SciFiNow

Book Club

Issue 118's Essential Read: Preacher: Gone To Texas by Garth Ennis & Steve Dillon

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88 Beginner's Guide: James SA Corey 90 Book Reviews 96 Robert Jackson Bennett 98 Graphic Novel Reviews 100 Rat Queens

Essential read: Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell

Susanna Clarke's sweeping novel of magic, history and English society was ten years in the writing, and not a day of that decade was wasted

WORDS **MATTHEW HANDRAHAN**

For Susanna Clarke, the most enjoyable period in the creation of a novel is the very beginning. At that point, the task is defined by potential and possibility, by experiments and exploration. Though the process is very much in their control, the author feels the same invigorating sense of anticipation about what's to come as their eventual reader. "You can write absolutely anything you like," she said following a lecture at the Free Library of Philadelphia. "You can always change it later on."

Given that Clarke has completed only one novel in her 20 years as a published author, it's fair to assume that she's referring to *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell*, one of the most successful literary debuts of the 21st century. And she might well reflect on its origins with affection, because the 'later on' part lasted far longer than she would have considered. Does any author know, as those first words tumble onto the page, that it will be ten years before the last ones are in place? Perhaps not.

"For ten years, these two characters would not let me go," Clarke said in Philadelphia. "And during ten years, I assure you, at several points I really would rather have given up writing this very long book. But they wouldn't let me. They drew me back in and demanded that I tell their story."

This compulsion grew out of the void. In 1992, Clarke was an Oxford graduate whose career up to that point had been split between the publishing industry and teaching English as a foreign language. Writing fiction was a private passion, the opportunity to earn a living from it little more than a daydream. After several years of trying, she was finally ready to abandon a detective novel whose plot had remained just beyond her grasp. It was, she later said in Philadelphia, "a very bad detective novel," and that bruising realisation led to the unhappy possibility of another. "I gave up," she said, "and to all intents and purposes I gave up writing."

Clarke was also without a job, and in that bleak moment she retreated to a suitably bleak landscape: Blackhall Rocks, an economically depressed mining village on England's north-east coast, where her father served as a minister. Holed up in her parents' home, Clarke fought the one-two punch of boredom and a heavy cold by returning to JRR Tolkien's *The Lord Of The Rings*. It was the first time she had read the book since she was a teenager. When she finished, she returned to the beginning and started again. During the course of that second reading, the fog that had clouded the path forward started to thin. Her next attempt at a novel wouldn't be about a detective; it would be about magic. It would be like the books she loved the most.

"I always really liked magicians," Clarke said to BBC Nottingham. "I'm not even sure why, except that they know things other people don't and they live in untidy rooms full of strange objects. In CS Lewis's *Narnia* stories there are only two magicians. One is weak and wicked, and the other barely gets two lines of dialogue. But they both fascinated me."

Clarke would create two magicians of her own, both arrogant and single-minded in distinctive ways. Oddly enough, she had already encountered the first of them years before the notion of actually writing about magic had even entered her head. While falling asleep one evening, the image of a confident Englishman in 18th Century dress bubbled up from her subconscious. He was standing in a Venetian piazza, locked in conversation with other English visitors to that great Italian city. This man would ultimately become Jonathan Strange, one of her two magicians. The other, Gilbert Norrell, was created to be his antithesis in all but one respect: their shared fascination with and devotion to magic.

One other aspect of the story seemed predetermined: its location. England would be more than an arbitrary backdrop. Clarke wanted the country and its landscape to be fundamental to every theme, event and character. The history would be English history, the magic would be English magic, and her creative reference points would be those she cherished the most from English culture.



SYNOPSIS

If you wish to understand magic in England in 1806 then there are only two routes likely to yield any results. The first is magical books, the font of all magic theory since the apparent disappearance of practical magic centuries before. The second is The Learned Society of York Magicians, self-appointed experts in magic theory, and the owners of the only books not already purchased by the only practicing magician in England.

That man is Gilbert Norrell, a lifelong student of magic who has taken it upon himself to restore the public's faith. Soon, however, another magician emerges: Jonathan Strange, both more impulsive and naturally gifted than his counterpart, and a direct threat to Norrell's status as the saviour of English magic. Their friendship soon gives way to rivalry, and both are confronted with the unforeseen reach of England's dormant magical power, and their role in the prophecy of the Raven King.

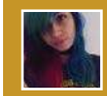


The story takes place among the backdrop of the Napoleonic Wars.


“IT TOOK RATHER MORE THAN TEN YEARS TO WRITE, WHICH IS A CRAZY AMOUNT OF TIME TO SPEND ON ANYTHING”
SUSANNA CLARKE
© Rex

Your Take On The Classic

WHAT YOU THOUGHT @SCIFINOW


"Oh man, this book is so rich and immersive. Lengthy read but such a magical world grounded in its own history." **@Steppenfreak**


"Two great characters, there different approaches to magic, and their love/hate bromance makes for a compelling read. Loved it." **@dept42**


"An endlessly delicious novel, I wanted it to go on forever - something new and strange* on every page! *pun intended." **@sennydreadful**


"I really enjoyed reading it, the language is joyous and the footnotes stories in themselves, really couldn't put it down #BookClub" **@Cascararogue**


"Looooooooooooooooooooooonnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnggggggggg!!" **@K1MJ0NG1LL**


"Second only to Clive Barker's Imajica. Great book. So believable." **@Jerryturner262**

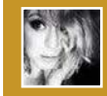

"Oh, don't even start me: we'll be here all week. Recently re-read it and there's just SO much to unpack. Too much to fit in here!" **@LouMorgan**


"Great story that gave magic a very different feel. I especially loved The Learned Society of York Magicians, theoretical magicians" **@PasmineJalmer**


"It's like a mash up of Harry Potter, The Matrix and Alice in Wonderland - with a bit of steampunk thrown in. Loved it! **@AliCampbell_68**


"An extensive look into a plausible past where magic was real and reality was magical. Great book. And great tv adaptation btw!" **@ruiduarte16**


"I think there is no more perfect book in English." **@JaneNX01**


"I am just reading it now and only on pg 250 but I really like it. Writing is so funny. Reminds me a bit of Douglas Adams" **@myracarmel**

What do you think? Let us know on Twitter or Facebook

"I'm a magpie sort of a writer: I collect things that attract me, I lay them all out and I try to find patterns and stories to connect them up," she said in an interview for Authors On Tour Live. "I made *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell* out of the bright shiny things that I love: out of magic, and winter landscapes, and firesides, and descriptions of books and libraries, and the social comedy of Jane Austen, and the London of Charles Dickens. And I made the narrative voice of the book out of the voices of other English writers. I think there's a bit of CS Lewis in there, a bit of E Nesbitt, and perhaps a bit of Arthur Conan Doyle."

The ten years between those early, optimistic days and the novel's eventual publication in 2004 were consumed by research. The decision to use England at the start of the 19th Century as the setting, for example, was initially motivated by the clothing glimpsed during an afternoon's reverie, and cemented by her long-standing admiration for Jane Austen. In practice, though, it meant countless days chronicling the period, from the grandest trends to the most humble domestic rituals. Books with names like *Georgian Embroidery And Spoons: 1650 To 1930* became part of her daily routine. It also placed Strange and Norrell within a few days' sailing of the Napoleonic Wars; "a natural arena for them to show their skills," she reasoned in Philadelphia, and so it proved. But that demanded yet more meticulous research into the soldiers, the details of the battles, and pretty much everything the Duke of Wellington ever thought, said, or was thought to have said.

Having never attempted a fantasy story before, Clarke also had to build a basis for the fictional aspects of her world. A reading of Tolkien had galvanised Clarke's thinking, but she was aware of the way *The Lord Of The Rings* had become synonymous with fantasy literature as a whole. *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell* would be based on much older beliefs, from a time when "every English field was inhabited by faeries. People actually believed that you could be lured away unto this eerie world, and the danger was ever present." Clarke sourced every scrap and half-remembered tradition from English folklore, plugging the gaps with similar mythology from Ireland and Scotland. Speaking at Authors On Tour Live, she observed that "the most interesting aspect of faeries is what people actually believed about them, when they still believed in faeries."

In conducting so much research, Clarke ultimately began to construct a history of her own: at one end were Strange and Norrell; at the other was an enigmatic figure known as the Raven King, and between were centuries of magical history, worked out in a ballooning collection of footnotes, as if transplanted from some long forgotten textbook on Clarke's alternate world. At first, the footnotes were written for personal reasons; as an aid to keep track of her story, and to keep her focused. Eventually they felt necessary.

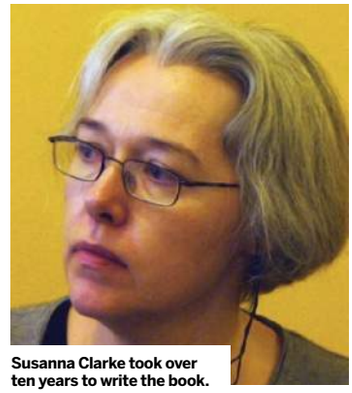
"I tried a footnote to explain one little point and immediately I realised that here was the perfect vehicle for writing little stories of the medieval history and going off down any side-road," she recalled in an interview with *Book Slut*. "And now there are 150 of them."

> "I REALISED THAT HERE WAS THE PERFECT VEHICLE FOR WRITING LITTLE STORIES OF THE MEDIEVAL HISTORY"
> SUSANNA CLARKE

To employ a rather shaky metaphor, these disparate parts were the bricks in a vast and complicated wall that, in her quieter moments, Clarke was doubtful she would ever complete. The cement to bring it all together took the form of yet another tangent: a series of short stories, completed and published at the rate of around one for every year that she worked on *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell*. In those stories, Clarke discovered her approach to the way magic functioned in her world. She poked and prodded at real English history, and came to understand how it could exist side-by-side with the fantastic. "I didn't want to be a short story writer," she admitted in an interview conducted by Neil Gaiman. "I


Bertie Carvel and Eddie Marsan starred in the BBC's TV adaptation.


Fairies are another fantasy staple included in the story.


Susanna Clarke took over ten years to write the book.

would try out ideas. They fed back into the novel."

The book that emerged and its myriad tangents was unique, and in a way that would have sent most publishers running. But that was 1992, in a world that had never heard of *Harry Potter* or *His Dark Materials*, making it perhaps the most commercially viable genre. Clarke's agent found a publisher that just so happened to be the same company that had propelled a certain boy wizard to global success: Bloomsbury. Clarke's initial response was relief, but she noticed that *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell* had stirred an uncommon level of enthusiasm among the staff at Bloomsbury.

"It wasn't that extraordinary a thing at the beginning," she told *Writers On The Record*. "I had no sense that there was anything unusual going on. It was only when I went down to London to see the publisher, and I met all of these people – in publicity, in sales, in marketing – who'd read huge chunks of it. I'd been [working] in publishing for 20 years. I knew that wasn't common."

Her instincts were entirely correct. It was inevitable that the press would draw a line between *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell* and *Harry Potter*, even though Clarke had started her book years before JK Rowling's debut was published, and avoided the entire series once it had rocketed to fame. No, the real influence of *Harry Potter* can be found only in Bloomsbury's confidence in her writing: their decision to leave in all of those footnotes, to agree to its 800-ish pages with only the smallest edits, and to embark on one of the more opulent marketing campaigns in 21st Century literature.

"It took rather more than ten years," Clarke said to BBC Nottingham, "which is a crazy amount of time to spend on anything – except building a cathedral, growing a garden or educating a child." And yet after all that time, *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell* was heralded in a manner that honoured her endeavour and the brilliance of her imagination.

On the day the first reviews were published, Neil Gaiman added a brief note at the end of a post on his blog. He had been sent a sample of Clarke's writing almost a decade before. He immediately asked for more.

"For many years, whenever people have asked me who my favourite fantasy writers are, after I've mentioned Susanna Clarke, they look blank," he wrote. "'One day,' I'd tell them, 'she'll finish her novel…'

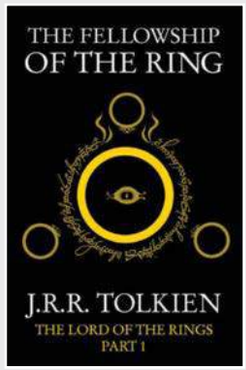
"And look, she did, she did!"

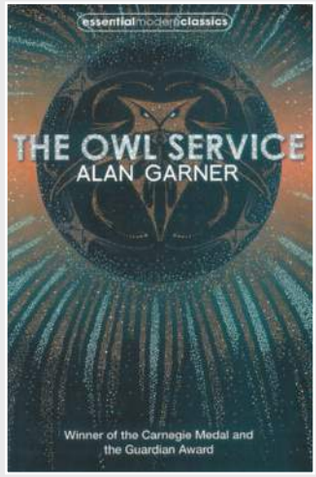
Where Have I Seen This Before?

WHERE THE MAGIC HAPPENS

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING

The annals of literature aren't short of books that took bewildering stretches of time to complete, and in terms of fantasy the best example is also the most famous. Tolkien worked for around 16 years before the first novel in his celebrated trilogy appeared, with much of that time devoted to constructing the landscape and history of Middle-Earth. With a journey as epic as this, it's easy to see why.



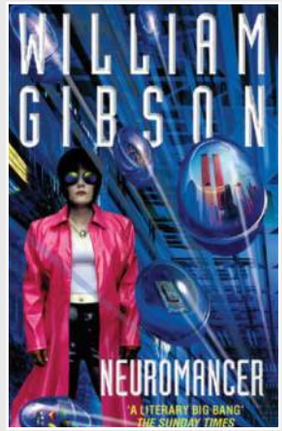


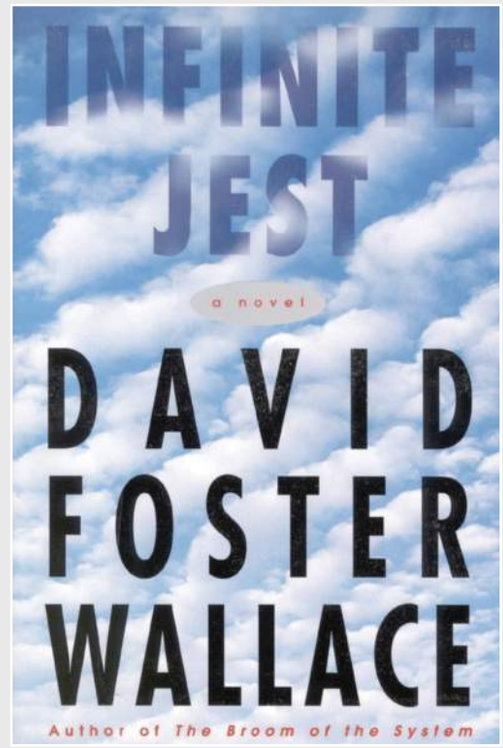
THE OWL SERVICE

Clarke's notion that magic should be rooted in the English landscape is an idea inspired by the work of Alan Garner. "He is the English writer above all others who is steeped in English landscape, English past, English dialect," she told Book Slut. "He writes about the bones of England." All of Garner's books display this tendency, but *The Owl Service* is the best place to start.

NEUROMANCER

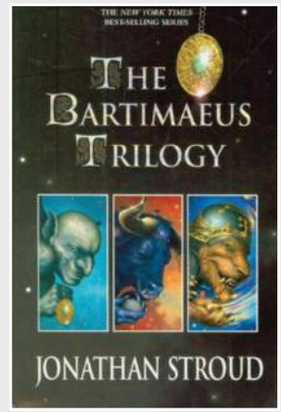
There are so many remarkable aspects of *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell* that it's easy to overlook that it was also Susanna Clarke's first published novel. In that respect, she's in very good company: there are myriad sparkling debuts in science fiction and fantasy, but we're going with *Neuromancer*, the story of a computer hacker pulling off the ultimate hack. Not many authors get to start a revolution. William Gibson did it at the first attempt.





INFINITE JEST

When it comes to footnotes we must include the late David Foster Wallace. *Infinite Jest*'s central conceit – a movie so entertaining it renders the viewer incapable of being interested in anything else – has the distinct tang of dystopian science fiction.

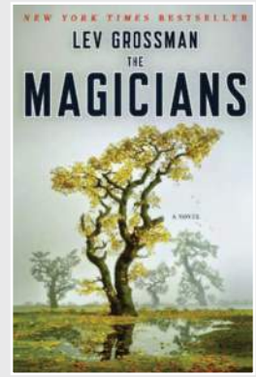


THE BARTIMAEUS TRILOGY

Jonathan Stroud's trilogy of novels are written for a younger audience than Clarke's, but there is a good deal of common ground. They are set in an alternate London where magic is a fact of life, and they blend real people and events with fiction and mythology. And then there are the footnotes, which are both necessary and very, very funny.

THE MAGICIANS

The magic in *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell* is presented as difficult and intractable, something to be understood only through practice and book-learning. Clarke was chiefly inspired by Ursula Le Guin's *Earthsea* novels in that regard, and the concept of magic more as an academic pursuit is also explored in Lev Grossman's excellent 2009 novel, *The Magicians*.





Which author would you like to see tackled next?
Let us know on Twitter or Facebook

A Beginner's Guide To James SA Corey

Kings of the world

WORDS **POPPY-JAY PALMER**

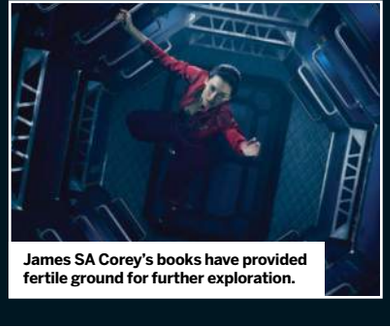
Like his books, James SA Corey was born from an idea. Literally. He's not even a real person. He is simply the pen name of award-winning writers and Albuquerque natives Daniel Abraham and Ty Franck. Together, the pair created the wonderful world (ahem, universe) of *The Expanse*, a story that has captivated readers everywhere.

The Expanse takes us into the distant future to a time when humankind has managed to colonise much of the Solar System, with people building lives on countless moons, asteroid belts and planets far from home. With the help of an artificially sustained Einstein-Rosen bridge created by a long-dead alien race, people are able to gain access to strange new worlds and traverse the universe. The series follows the adventures of the crew of the Rocinante ship: Captain Jim Holden, former solider of the UN Navy; Naomi Nagata, the ship's genius executive officer; Alex Kamal, the Martian-raised pilot; and Amos Burton, the amiable Chief Engineer with a dark past.

Franck revealed that he originally began creating the idea for a massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG), and then a tabletop game. At this point, Abraham had already written several books by himself, including the first few novels in his *Long Price Quartet* series, and recognised the potential in Franck's imaginary world. Abraham told him, "People who write books don't do this much research," so the pair teamed up to create James SA Corey – James for Abraham's middle name, Corey for Franck's, and SA for the initials of each of Abraham's daughters.

The Syfy Channel also saw the potential in their world and stories, and commissioned a television adaptation of the series, which has recently been commissioned for second series and is continuing to receive dazzling reviews from both fans and critics alike.





James SA Corey's books have provided fertile ground for further exploration.



Syfy developed *The Expanse* into a TV show of the same name.



James SA Corey ventured into the *Star Wars* universe with *Honor Among Thieves.*



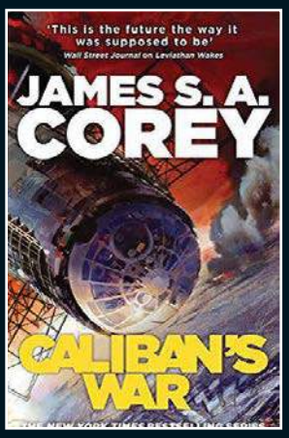
The saga begins

Setting the scene

LEVIATHAN WAKES
Publisher: Orbit Books
Published: 2011
Price: £8.99

Set in a future universe where humanity has colonised the Solar System, officer Jim Holden and his crew find themselves guarding a secret when they discover a derelict ship called the Scopuli. But the secret turns out to be more deadly than they could have ever imagined. For many, the first book in series is by far the best. It sets up a unique world of intrigue, excitement and space that draws in readers and stays with them. Thankfully, five novels, four novellas and a short story follow.

"It's is a masterpiece! Not read its sequels yet but if they are anything like the original, epic! Genre blends galore." **@josephwordsmith**



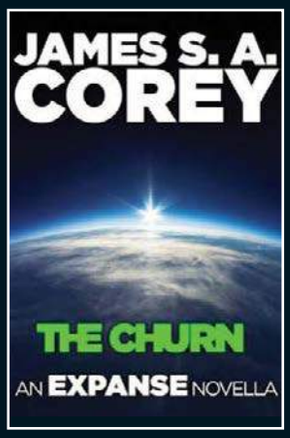
The saga continues

What happens next...

CALIBAN'S WAR
Publisher: Orbit Books
Published: 2012
Price: £8.99

The second novel in *The Expanse* series, and follows on from where *Leviathan Wakes* left off. Earth, Mars and the Belter colonies on the Asteroid Belt are still caught in conflict, and Jim Holden and the crew of the Rocinante are still having trouble dealing with it. The heart of the series continues to be the cast of characters, each of which are rich, complex and very human, and can be blamed for sucking thousands of readers into a bottomless bit of *Expanse* love. Damn you, James SA Corey!

"The characters are blast to read, especially Avasarala/Bobbie Draper. The plot moves fast, and the world is well-developed" **@babrooks213**



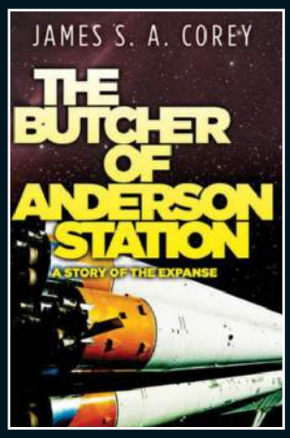
Amos be leaving

Life before the Rocinante

THE CHURN
Publisher: Orbit Books
Published: 2014
Price: £1.49

Those desperate to get a deeper glance into the *Expanse* universe before *Leviathan Wakes* need look no further. *The Churn* gives an insight into Amos Burton's pre-Rocinante life in Baltimore, USA. But things quickly get sinister: in Baltimore, crime pays you or kills you, unless the authorities get you first, and Burton soon finds himself running from the law. It's honestly not as cheesy as it sounds. *The Churn* is an intriguing novella that is often considered to be Expanse 0.2, and slots in between *Drive* and *The Butcher Of Anderson Station.*

"I liked *The Churn.* Amos is my favorite character, but I also felt the story was better than in Anderson, which was also quite OK." **@superju55i**



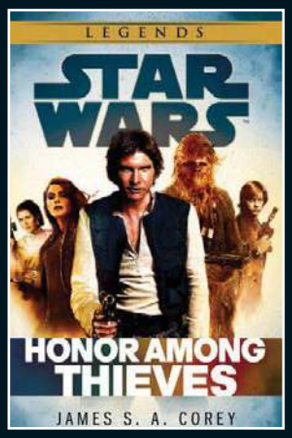
Long story short

Life before space

THE BUTCHER OF ANDERSON STATION
Publisher: Orbit Books
Published: 2011
Price: £1.49

This short story takes another look into the world before Jim Holden and his crew. Before he became the leader of the Outer Planets Alliance, Colonel Fred Johnson had another title: the Butcher of Anderson Station. It does a marvellous job of adding yet more detail to the world Corey created. Twists, turns and a dramatic conclusion make it a perfect extra for when fan energy is low after completing the series. Could Johnson be one of the most complex *Expanse* characters yet?

"Didn't like how the *Expanse* TV series changed the *Butcher Of Anderson Station* story line. Much better how it was told in the book." **@RoyalPayne77**



Flying Solo

Get your Han-ds on this

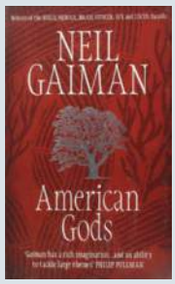
STAR WARS: HONOR AMONG THIEVES
Publisher: Arrow Books
Published: 2015
Price: £8.99

Corey ventures into the world of *Star Wars* in this exciting one-shot. Taking place just after the destruction of the Death Star in *A New Hope*, master smuggler Han Solo jumps back into the action in an attempt to rescue a rebel spy. The rescue mission is simple enough, but the intel he possesses sends Han spiralling into wild adventure of threats, danger and the Empire's ultimate weapon against the Rebel Alliance. Every *Star Wars* fan should own the book, even though it's no longer canon.

"Read it last year, finally read a *Star Wars* book (read a few more since) it was fun, Han Solo evoked quite well." **@FistOfFiori**

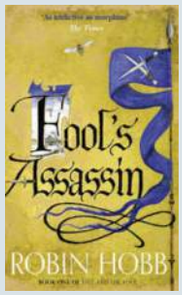
Your Five Auto-Buy Authors

CHOOSE YOUR TOP FIVE @SCIFINOW ON TWITTER



1. Neil Gaiman

"Because he's one of a kind. I can never put his books down. I'm addicted to reading from certain storytellers. Him the most. **@milyellex**



2. Robin Hobb

"A world I want to sink in. That works down to the basic level of everyday life. Plots that make me read until I'm falling down." **@La_Tarasque**



3. Joe Hill and Joe Abercrombie

"It's just a trust thing, you know they could write carpet reviews and it would be gripping." **@Opaque_Ronin**



4. Margaret Atwood

"She has always written smart and thought-provoking books." **@Harlegator68**



5. Brandon Sanderson

"Doesn't matter if it a *Reckoners*, *Mistborn* or other, I will buy it!" **@solarstarchild**

Details **Author:** China Miéville **Publisher:** Picador **Price:** £12.99 **Released:** Out now

THIS CENSUS-TAKER

At the mountains of memories

Every new piece of fiction from China Miéville is a cause for excitement. Last year we got his superb short story collection *Three Moments Of An Explosion*, and here's a beautiful novella from the author of *Perdido Street Station*, *Kraken* and *Un Lun Dun*.

This Census-Taker is told by a man reflecting on his youth, and opens with the traumatic event that would define his childhood. He remembers running down the hillside into the town, shouting that his mother has killed his father. Except he's got it wrong: his father has killed his mother. At least, that's what he saw.

Miéville creates a beautiful landscape in an uncertain country and era, where a small town perches on the side of a mountain and is halfway to being swallowed back up by it. The land holds a power over the people who live in it. Trees push through buildings as if reclaiming them, the bridge's reluctance to remain functional seems to be palpable, wild animals of uncertain species can be heard at night, and a hole in a cave operates as something approaching a sacrificial altar.

The narrator's recollection of his childhood is wonderfully rendered, as Miéville fully immerses us in the boy's world, only occasionally taking a slight step back. His parents have created a life for themselves outside the small town, whose inhabitants occasionally make the journey up the hill for the father's services. In one of the novella's many partially explained teases, we're told that he makes keys for customers to solve any kind of problem.

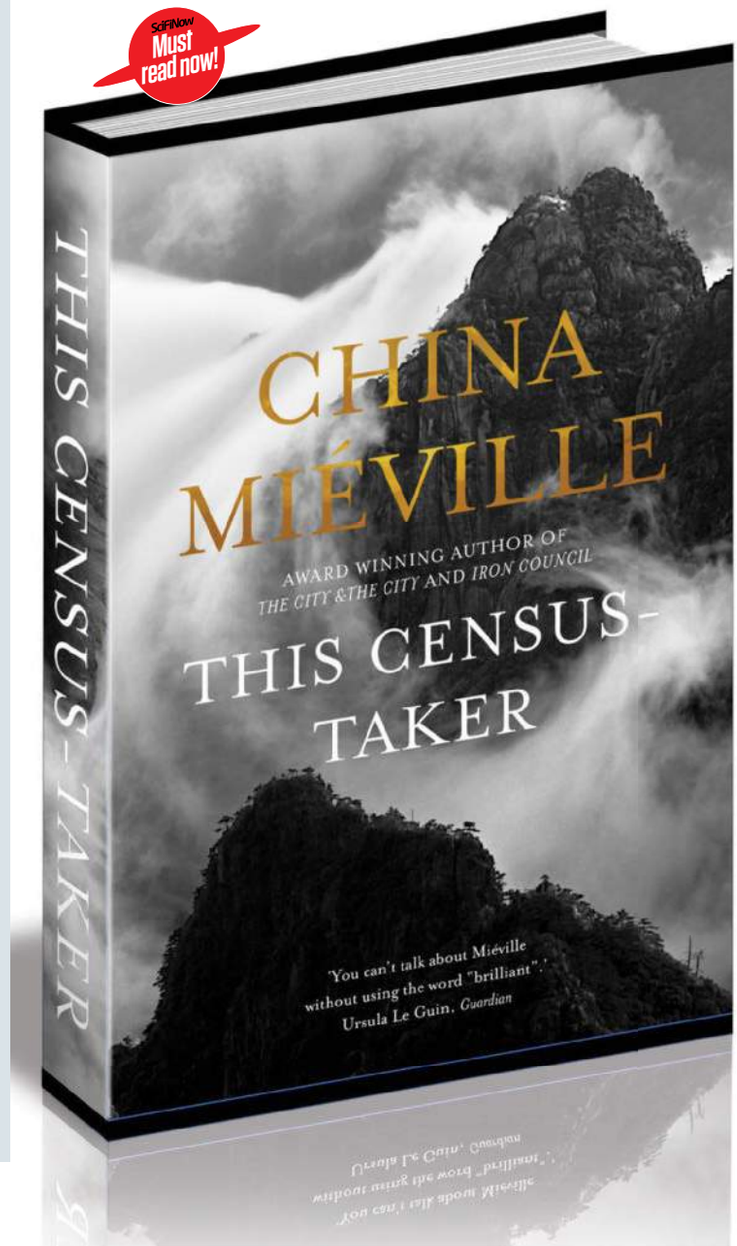
The narrator wonders at the seemingly fragile state of his family's happiness, with a mother who grows more mysterious the closer she gets, and a father whose amiable kindness is punctuated by violent outbursts (never directed at the boy). The two characters are expertly drawn, with each moment of human warmth or cold distancing taking on massive importance.

With both parents established as outsiders, or 'uphillers', the boy yearns to belong, and at his mother's prompting finds himself drawn to the children who run half-wild in the town's streets. When things get bad at home, he goes to them, only to be continually thwarted by the town's approximation of law enforcement. The portrayal of his desperation and loss are heartbreaking.

Eventually it falls to the titular census-taker to offer the narrator an escape, but the exact nature of this census is unclear, and that secrecy has a real power. At one point the narrator talks about the type of book that he is writing, and explains that there are three kinds: the first book is the census that he is now working on as an adult; the second is the book for other people to read, which is the story he is telling, and which he tells us had previously been started by someone else; and the third is private and full of secrets, which he reveals is already a quarter full.

With so much kept at a deliberate distance, what we're allowed to see and to know takes on an incredible power. *This Census-Taker* takes root quickly, and you won't soon forget it.

Jonathan Hatfull



SciFiNow scored **9** for The Census-Taker

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

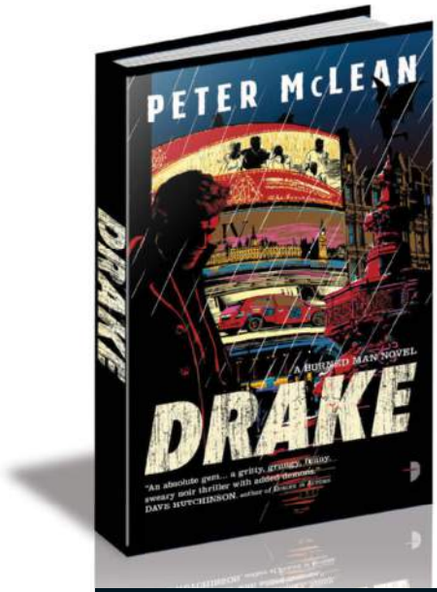
Perdido Street Station
China Miéville
If you're looking for a more, erm, detailed vision, this novel is a giant that is worth getting into.

Details **Author:** Peter McLean **Publisher:** Angry Robot **Price:** £7.99 **Released:** Out now

DRAKE: THE BURNED MAN BOOK 1

Devil's bargain

The troubled demon-summoner for hire might be familiar to fans of urban fantasy, but there's a reason why people keep writing them and we keep reading them: when they're good, they're great fun. With Don Drake, author Peter McLean has created a booze-drenched, shabby, down-and-out bloke who's getting put through hell by creatures well-acquainted with the place.



What Don does have going for him is The Burned Man, a foul-mouthed demon trapped in the form of a fetish, who helps him conduct his business (although he also needs to feed on Don's blood), so when the diabolist gets in over his head and owes several weighty favours to the local gang lord demon, he's got a head start. When things go wrong, he ends up with the Furies on his back and a stalker who might be a fallen angel.

It's hard to shake the memory of Mike Carey's Felix Castor novels (which in turn were reminiscent of *Hellblazer*), while the sweary, unnatural sidekick brings Richard Kadrey's Sandman Slim to mind, but McLean plunges us into his grubbily real South London with confidence and a strong voice of his own.

For a swaggering supernatural expert, Drake has got a refreshingly low opinion of himself, which is borne out in how easily the various otherworldly entities lead him around by the nose, leaving him miserable, beaten to within an inch of his life, and drowning his sorrows with vodka and a bacon sandwich. And while most of the female characters are presented as being gorgeous, for the most part they either hate his guts or are interested in showing his own guts to him. As for that violence, McLean doesn't flinch when it comes to showing the consequences of Don unleashing a vorehound on an unsuspecting victim.

We might be in chartered territory, but this is a highly entertaining introduction to a world and a character we're excited to return to.

Jonathan Hatfull

SciFiNow scored **7** for Drake: The Burned Man Book 1

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

The Devil You Know
Mike Carey
The first Felix Castor book is a great introduction to his Constantine-esque freelance exorcist.

Author: Jen Williams **Publisher:** Headline **Price:** £8.99 **Released:** 25 February

THE SILVER TIDE

They're back!

Not to be mistaken with Michael Tod's book of the same name, which tells the darling little tale of squirrels in Dorset, this *Silver Tide* contains nothing remotely cute and cuddly as it storms its way to conclude the adventures of *The Black Feather Three*.

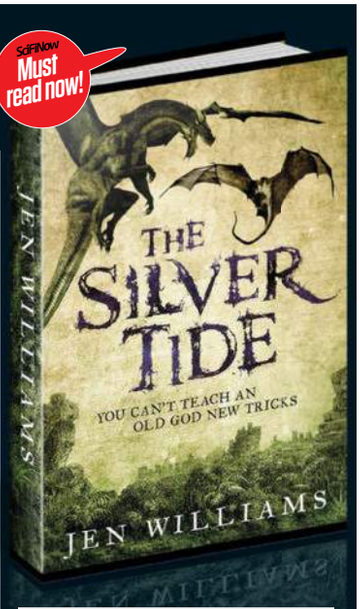
Wydrin, Lord Frith and Sir Sebastian join forces once more as the employees of a treasure-hungry pirate who, just to complicate matters, happens to be Wydrin's mother, Devinia the Red. The treasure in question resides on a cursed island, Devinia hoping that Frith's magical abilities will help her ship navigate the deadly waters that others have failed to cross.

As Captain Jack will tell you, no pirate mission ever runs smoothly, and after an ambush the crew find themselves separated, each faced with their own conveniently perilous situations. The remaining crew find themselves the subjects of a beautifully constructed subplot that has essence of *Jason And The Argonauts* about it after a treasure haul goes desperately awry and a big old golden man joins the party.

The Silver Tide does not fail to take us on a non-stop ride, only this time there is the added element of time travel. It's a contrived concept for some storytellers, but not for Williams, as not only does she allow us access to some much loved and gone too soon characters, we are also treated to a devastating butterfly effect as Wydrin and co crash into the war that saw the mages defeat the Gods.

It is almost bittersweet to say goodbye to such unique and engaging characters, so for anyone yet to meet this trio of misfits, in the immortal words of The Copper Cat, Wydrin of Crosshaven: "Ye Gods and little fishes" what are you waiting for?

Claire Nicholls



SciFiNow scored **8** for The Silver Tide

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

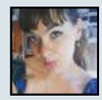


IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

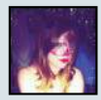
Six Of Crows
Leigh Bardugo
Six of Ketterdam's characters join forces to pull off a heist that could make them legends.

YOUR READS

What you lot have been reading this month



"*LOTR*; cos I made a deal with @CaptiveCarnival that I would if they read Isaac Asimov - spreading the Sci-Fi love!" **@dannithegeek**



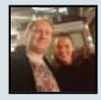
"In the middle of *All The Birds In The Sky*, really love the characters and being able to see how they have grown. #BookClub" **@Cascararogue**



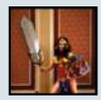
"*We Don't Need Roads: The Making Of The Back To The Future Trilogy* by Caseen Gaines, pretty good so far! #BookClub" **@RockingRhys**



"Almost finished *A Study In Scarlet* by Conan Doyle. Very quick read, but great fun. #BookClub" **@TheCrowAndGin**



"Reading *The Girl With All The Gifts* and to be honest, not really loving it so far. Hope it gets better. #BookClub" **@Danburden1138**



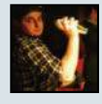
"*Moonfleet* by J Meade Falkner from 1898. It's enthralling & I can't imagine why I haven't read it before. #BookClub" **@mamacrow**



"*The Witching Hour*. Anne Rice. It intimidated me honestly, not really interested in witches. Now however, I cannot leave it alone. #BookClub" **@BinnySedai**



"Just started *Lost Girl* by Adam Nevill excellent story so far #gripping #BookClub" **@philbooty**



"*5th Wave*, different take on invasion story but it has just gone full YA on the main character. Hoping for improvement. #BookClub" **@Pugzly101**



"Currently reading *Dreamstone Moon* by Paul Leonard as part of my Eighth Doctor read." **@ChrisHatch**

Tell us **what you're reading** on Twitter or Facebook

60 SECONDS WITH Greg Lwin



How would you pitch *The Samsaric*?
I would say *The Samsaric* is based on one of the oldest civilisation of history, Mesopotamia, blending in with spirituality.

I wanted to portray a story told of the ancient era, taken into the ancient world, and yet we can still be able to connect with our daily struggles in life.

What is it about the vampire myth that you find fascinating?
Most of the ancient myths deemed them as creatures of darkness, consuming blood or the life force of a person. Regardless of this, their victims appear helpless, as though they can't help but drawn towards these dark qualities.

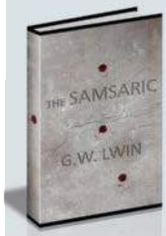
If we can learn to observe within us, our pure mind is confronted daily with qualities such as desires, wants, and needs. We stress and get anxious about it, yet we still are in pursuit of these sensations regardless. Our pursuits never seem to satisfy our desires completely.

Therefore, to me, vampires are a mirror of these dark, compelling qualities, our daily struggle to overcome.

There's obviously a lot of spirituality and history woven in as well. Was the book always conceived as blending these elements?
When I started writing, it was purely based on a fantasy I had in mind. Of course, this was many years ago. Later on, as I started my spiritual journey while writing, I had to change many of my initial ideas and perceptions as I've evolved and still evolving day to day.

Is it important to have characters the reader can relate to when you're dealing with horror and fantasy?
Yes absolutely. *The Samsaric* tells the story of an immortal soul going through numerous rebirths or reincarnations as a mortal, taking on many personalities and characters and dealing with the struggles of life and emotions.
And there is an important message that I would like to pass on to the readers, which will be portrayed in the final chapter.

Do you remember what first got you into the genre?



It would have to be Bram Stoker's *Dracula* film back in 1992 when I was in my early teens.

The Samsaric by Greg Lwin is available now from Amazon.

Author: Clifford Beal **Publisher:** Solaris **Price:** £7.99 **Released:** 11 February

THE GUNS OF IVREA

High adventures on the high seas

SciFiNow Must read now!



In a semi-magical world of relatively honest pirates and murderous monks, where faith can be unequivocally proved, are blasphemy and hereticism more deserving of condemnation and the status quo more in need of protection? That's a fairly deep question, and one that *The Guns Of Ivrea* delves into only peripherally, despite this being the primary motivation behind the fast-paced plot.

Despite raising certain questions around belief, knowledge and justification, author Clifford Beal is far more concerned with wrapping these questions up in a gripping world and compelling characters within *The Guns Of Ivrea*. And this is no bad thing; his turn of phrase is frequently gripping, with a tighter rein on plot than his characterisations, while the seafaring adventures of our three protagonists are quite absorbingly chaotic.

The Guns Of Ivrea isn't attempting to be the latest unnecessarily complex and grandiose novel; rather a genuine adventure story to be devoured in a mere handful of sittings. This isn't to say it's overly simplistic, however; with its focus drawn away from the popular political power fantasies of late and towards the more emotional effect of these decisions on its citizens, we can see great potential in this thrilling universe.

However, to highlight one of the few negatives, *The Guns of Ivrea* does have the occasional regretful lapse into traditional fantasy fan service – busty maidens, sultry mermaids, Sapphic sisters, whores aplenty – made all the more noticeable by the quality of the writing at points other than these. Every few chapters or so, a new sexy lady will be jarringly displayed for the reader, and while it is certainly not as prevalent as in other similar works, it's almost more of a disappointment to find it at all in a book that elsewhere delivers an excellently gripping story of thievery, betrayal, piracy, and adventure. This aside, it is a fantastic and satisfying read.

Rebecca Richards

8 SciFiNow scored **8** for The Guns Of Ivrea
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...
The Liveship Traders: Ship Of Magic
Robin Hobb
This excellent trilogy is one we recommend picking up.

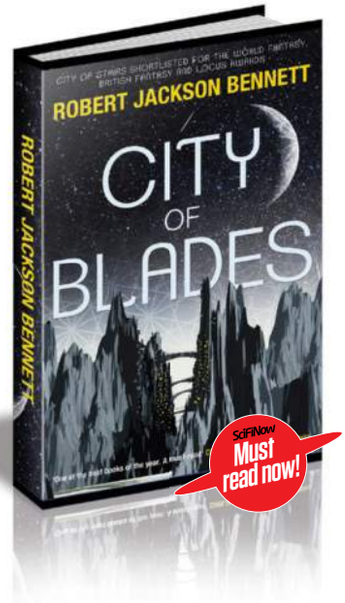
Details **Author:** Robert Jackson Bennett **Publisher:** Jo Fletcher Books **Price:** £14.99 **Released:** Out now

CITY OF BLADES

Damn the gods

After his sensational blend of alternate history, angry gods, politics and espionage, Robert Jackson Bennett returns to the world he created in *City Of Stairs* with *City Of Blades*.

The battle of Bulikov was won, and the gods were defeated for a second time. Given that they were all supposed to be dead anyway, there's understandably a lot of suspicion around anything that seems to be miraculous, so when a ludicrously conductive powder is found in the remote territory of Voortyashtan, Shara is keen to keep it under wraps.



She sends retired General Mulaghesh as her proxy, under the guise of investigating the disappearance of a civil servant. Inevitably the two are linked, but can the bitter veteran get to the bottom of things while navigating the irritable military who used to be her colleagues, the industrialists who are here to build a harbour for maximum profit, and the restless native tribes who feel their land is being exploited?

City Of Blades is incredibly detailed, from the history and mythology of Saypur, and in this case Voortyashtan, to the cultural tensions and the grinding bureaucracy that these soldiers find themselves caught in in the aftermath of a tremendous conflict. But it never feels dense; in fact it's frequently very funny (Bennett dedicates the novel to 'Sir Terry', and Pratchett's influence is clear). The irascible, flawed but determined Mulaghesh is tremendous company as she's forced into a life of espionage, bouncing between her former commanding officer and Signe, the daughter of Sigrud, who will let nothing stand in her way.

It's a very sharp portrayal of a political powder keg, complete with fantastic, fantastical action and hugely likeable characters. You're going to want to read this.

Jonathan Hatfull

9 SciFiNow scored **9** for City Of Blades
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...
The Violent History
Lavie Tidhar
A brilliant alternate-history tale, as superheroes who fought in World War II struggle to live with the memories.

ALEKHINE'S GUN

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Details **Authors:** Phil Szostak/Pablo Hidalgo/Kemp Remillard, Jason Fry **Publisher:** Abrams/DK Children/DK Children **Price:** £25/£14.99/£14.99 **Released:** Out now

STAR WARS

- THE ART OF THE FORCE AWAKENS
- THE VISUAL DICTIONARY
- INCREDIBLE CROSS-SECTIONS

SciFiNow Must read now!

Tie-in movie material is now as much of an inevitability as death and taxes, so when one of the biggest movies is released, you might as well dust off your wallets. But is it all worth getting?

The answer is probably yes. First up, *The Art Of Star Wars: The Force Awakens* chronicles the idea conception process on *Episode VII*, from the very first concept art to the final designs. There's nothing better for *Star Wars* aficionados, and it's amazing to see just how much the various aspects changed, while somehow staying recognisable.

The Visual Dictionary is similarly essential. Aimed primarily at younger readers, it was clearly written before the final cut was completed, with detailed profiles on written-out characters like Constable Zuvio, as well as breakdowns of Starkiller Base's snowspeeders (which didn't appear in the film) and lots of interesting trivia facts. For instance, did you know that Captain Phasma's armour is made from melted-down metal from Emperor Palpatine's yacht? You do now.

Meanwhile, *Incredible Cross-Sections* has more limited appeal, but there's still a lot to like here. Ultimately, detailed breakdowns of the various ships and vehicles in *The Force Awakens* is going to appeal to only the most hardened Lucas-hounds, although there is still room for revelations, like the annotations of the Millennium Falcon indirectly revealing that Han and Leia actually got married between *Return Of The Jedi* and *The Force Awakens*.

So there you go: take your pick. Alternatively, buy all three. You really can't go wrong.

Steve Wright

SciFiNow scored **10** for The Art Of Star Wars: The Force Awakens

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SciFiNow scored **9** for Star Wars: The Visual Dictionary

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

SciFiNow scored **8** for Star Wars: Incredible Cross-Sections

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

Details **Author:** Simon Morden **Publisher:** Gollancz **Price:** £16.99 **Released:** Out now

DOWN STATION

Down and out to a new world

SciFiNow Must read now!

For a science-fantasy adventure where dragons and sea monsters stalk the lands and castles can spring up from the ground, there's a real air of authenticity to Simon Morden's *Down Station*.

It may seem convenient that the characters are dunked head-first into this new location via a portal to Down from a present-day burning London. From Mary, on probation from prison, to Dalip, a Sikh student, the diverse group represents a sample of Londoners forced to escape their world. But their hometown and era are not merely so that the audience can relate to them; Morden provides the Capital as the epitome of their weaknesses – the reason why they fight or run and oppose their past lives in Down. This isn't obvious, but Morden provides thoughtful nuances of freedom and morality in the back-and-forths of the colloquial dialogue.

This rings even more true, as the world of Down is a blank Libertarian slate where the rules don't apply, a tabula rasa. There is no governing authority, only power and magic. There are secrets and betrayals – one wrong move means death and never getting back to London. The journey is a constant danger for the protagonists, but *Down Station* is not patronising or oversaturated with action. There are horrors that surprise as well as moments of wonder. The story is patient, and every sequence is both a physical battle and philosophical teaching that merge with well-paced hooks.

Down Station is filled with choices that mirror well into the real world, the sense that we are never too far from chaos and it's the decisions we make that define our future. Just watch out for the wyvern.

Carrie Mok

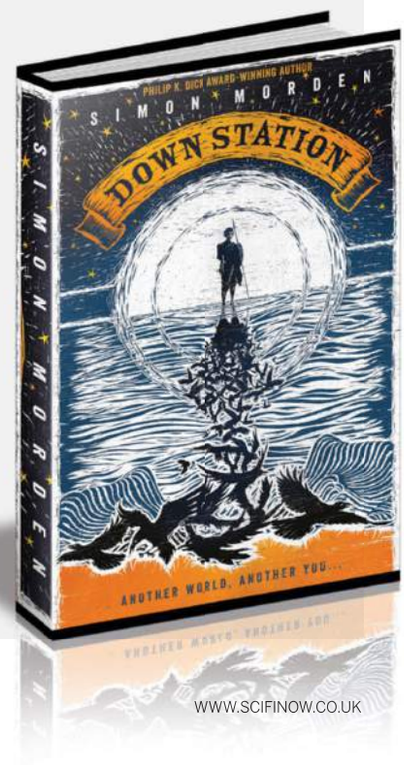
SciFiNow scored **9** for Down Station

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

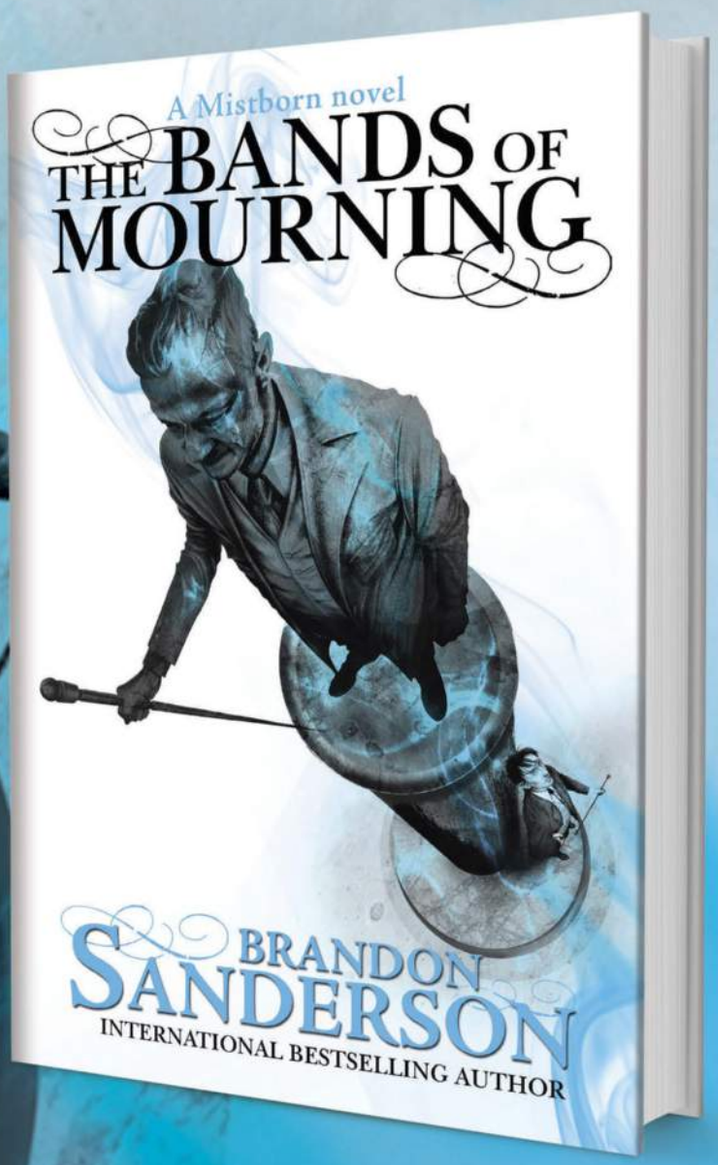


IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

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Neil Gaiman
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Discover a world unlike any other



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Gods Of War

Robert Jackson Bennett talks about returning to dead Gods and dangerous times with City Of Blades

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

Over the last five years, Robert Jackson Bennett has established himself as one of the genre's most exciting authors. Starting with the brilliant dustbowl-era horror *Mr Shivers*, Bennett has consistently pushed at the edges of the fantasy genre with novels like *The Troupe* (a fantastic tale of a Vaudeville gang that becomes much, much bigger than that), *The Company Man* (a fiendish industrial noir set in 1919) and *American Elsewhere* (in which, as simply as possible, a small town is not what it seems).

In 2014, Bennett took another bold leap with *City Of Stairs*, taking the reader to a world in which a revolution had concluded with former slave nation Saypur literally killing the gods of their oppressors. That novel began with our heroine Shara investigating a murder, and quickly led to conspiracies, murder, political intrigue, civil unrest and incredible battles with giant deities.

Now, Bennett is taking us back with *City Of Blades*, which sees retired General Mulaghesh reluctantly coerced by Shara into investigating the disappearance of a civil servant in the 'difficult' territory of Voortyashtan and the discovery of a potentially miraculous and almost certainly lucrative new substance. Can she keep on the right side of the warring local tribes, the driven industrialists dredging the ruins of an old civilisation to build a harbour, and the Saypurian military force struggling to keep a lid on everything?

Was it easy to step back into the world that you had created with *City Of Stairs*?

Fairly easy! The hardest part was trying to align the new city of Voortyashtan with everything else happening on the Continent. It was tempting to go way overboard and talk about how this policy or that geographical oddity affected trade or local politics or what have you. I had to scale back and remember what the reader would be interested in.

Had you thought that it was a world that could be explored beyond a single book?

Absolutely. I had considered writing a prequel set during the Divine days, but it's a bit better for those to stay locked away and mysterious. I think what drew me back in was that during *City Of Stairs*, the Continent was still a very primitive place. As it slowly modernised, I wondered – how would all these Divine ruins deal with train tracks and running water and electricity? How would you develop local industry? How would the populace deal with all the cultural changes that come from the influx of trade? These are the fun questions to toy around with.

***City Of Blades* finds a lot of ways to offer a new perspective on this world and the different societies, but what was it about Mulaghesh that made you want to put her at the centre of the story, and was it difficult to leave Shara (mostly) behind?**

It wasn't terribly hard to leave Shara behind, I found. Her story had been told, and it was fun to see her work – much as she always has – behind the scenes of this world, manipulating and guiding global events on a grand scale. Shara no longer has any doubt about what she's doing, but I knew that Mulaghesh would have lots of doubt and lots of questions.

Mulaghesh is every bit the old guard: she's a career soldier who's done a long stint as a governmental bureaucrat. In other words, she's an authority figure who's lived the whole of her life under the old way of doing things. As Shara's star rises and she becomes the new authority, bringing change with her, it's Mulaghesh and those of her generation who will most keenly feel those changes, and be forced to wonder if change is really possible.

What is your process for creating and writing for such a detailed world?

I've been immersed in this world for so long that it's hard for me to remember the process. I'd say the main thing I always liked to target was the collision of storybook logic, or dream-liked myth logic, with modern reality. The Divinities functioned using that strange sort of story logic – say, someone shooting a hole in the sky with a bow and arrow, and climbing up a rope ladder to walk on tops of the skies themselves – and it was fascinating to explore that from a perspective asserting that these things were true, that they had really happened, simply because the Divinities trumped reality. Exploring that angle and wondering how it would affect the present was a great deal of fun.

Voortyashtan often doesn't feel too fantastical. Are you consciously thinking about real-world parallels when writing these stories, or do they naturally spring from the stories you're telling?

A bit of both. Saypur feels it has every right to monitor the site where the deadliest city in history once stood, even if that does mean that they essentially have to occupy the region. That's sure to cause some blowback. These sorts of things have been going on since forever, though – it happened to Rome, and Greece, to Venice. Empires tend to overextend themselves, opening themselves up to local resistance.

It's great to see Sigrud back. Were you surprised by the fan reaction to him, and was it fun to explore his relationship with his daughter Signe?

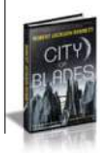
I wasn't terribly surprised – Sigrud is basically wearing a giant sign on his head that says, 'I AM HERE TO DO EXTREMELY AWESOME THINGS'. But what was fun with him and Signe was how he was completely out of his depth: he knows how to be a warrior, a spy, a marauder – but he has no idea how to be a leader or a father. Signe is much better at being a leader than he is, and they both know it. In some ways she's much more modern – she's sort of a 20th century icon, and he belongs to a much older age.

What was the first genre book or film to really speak to you was, and is there one that you return to regularly?

Oh, gosh. I suppose it would have been *The Dark Is Rising* [a book series written by Susan Cooper]. And I absolutely go back to it every once in a while.

Will you return to Saypur for a third novel?

I am! It's called *City Of Miracles*, and will be the final book in the series. Sigrud will be the main character of this one.



City Of Blades is out now, published by Jo Fletcher books.

ROBERT JACKSON BENNETT

Gods Of War



> “I’VE BEEN IMMERSED IN THIS WORLD FOR SO LONG THAT IT’S HARD FOR ME TO REMEMBER THE PROCESS”
>
> ROBERT JACKSON BENNETT

By the gods!

Fantasy’s finest deities

Wednesday
(American Gods)
The charismatic con man Mr Wednesday sets Neil Gaiman’s masterpiece in motion as he travels the country rallying the old deities to his cause… but to what end?

Crom
(Conan)
The Celtic-esque deity is the force that our brave barbarian Conan pledges fealty to as he goes through his adventures, created by the prolific Robert E Howard. I swear to you, Crum!

Blind Io
The current ruling god of Terry Pratchett’s *Discworld*, Blind Io has plenty of eyes (but not ravens, given their appetites), and has a love of thunder. So much so that he’s not letting anyone else have it.

Cthulhu
(The Call Of Cthulhu)
HP Lovecraft’s most enduring creation drives men to madness, and slumbering otherworldly god’s terrifying physique has intrigued legions of authors and artists ever since his first appearance in 1928.

Kraken
(Kraken)
The giant squid in China Miéville’s hugely entertaining 2010 novel may not look like a god to museum employee Billy Harrow, but the gangsters and magicians chasing it certainly think it might be.

Details **Writer:** Paul Cornell **Artist:** Neil Edwards **Publisher:** Titan
Price: £10.99 **Released:** Out now

DOCTOR WHO: THE FOUR DOCTORS

Time warriors

Multi-Doctor stories are seldom remembered fondly for anything other than fan-pleasing character moments/monster cameos – or in the case of 1993's charity guff-fest *Dimensions In Time*, remembered fondly for no reason at all.

Dimensions... isn't just a cheap shot. The 30th anniversary anti-special actually brings up an interesting reference point, as long-term Expanded Whoniverse scribe Paul Cornell celebrated the 30th with *Time & Time Again*, a one-shot strip published in the *Doctor Who Magazine* and drawn by the underappreciated John Ridgeway. In *Time...* Seven is forced to pell-mell through lots of classic episodes, quipping with his predecessors for a panel or two before neatly stepping back into continuity with a hard reset.

Set against a very active show, that hard reset is very important to making *Four Doctors* work, and there's a similar playful bit of storyline archaeology at work, this time involving 1964's *The Keys Of Marinus*.

While Edwards has a ball with the gurning and the flailing limbs, Cornell writes like a man who still devours the show every Saturday, his brain bubbling with observations that he can't wait to share. And it's Capaldi's Doctor who gets some of the most interesting moments as a consequence, neatly repositioning him in relation to his forebears.



SciFiNow Must read now!

With the War Doctor in the mix, it would be very easy to reduce the four into broad brushstroke variations of Cantankerous Doctor and Giddy Doctor, but Cornell handles it deftly.

Whether intentionally or not, he also manages to roll back the depiction of the Time War to something more enigmatic than 'The Day Of The Doctor's Saving Private Rassilon, while fans from the wilderness years will get a kick from his break with the long-standing Virgin New Adventures prohibition on mentioning the Valeyard.

James Hoare

SciFiNow scored **8** for Doctor Who: The Four Doctors
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Doctor Who: Prisoners Of Time
Scott Tipton, David Tipton/Various
IDW's 50th anniversary multi-Doctor epic is finally seeing an official UK release from Titan too.





Details **Writer:** Pat Mills **Artist:** Simon Davis **Publisher:** Rebellion
Price: £16.99 **Released:** Out now

SLÁINE: THE BRUTANIA CHRONICLES BOOK 2

Druid awakening

Sláine has always been an surprisingly intellectual comic. A common motif – especially when the strip left Celtic myth and started era-hopping – has been the conflict between ideologies depicted as literal conflicts between the titular warrior-king and his Lovecraftian enemies, but here the battle ground begins to put the virile brawn of Sláine MacRoth at a distinct disadvantage, taking place within his mind, beautifully rendered in Simon Davis' expressive, painterly style.

It's a surprisingly affecting experience to see Sláine so vulnerable, but with some eerie Trojans to battle too there's enough head-lopping to keep the reader's worldview from being truly disturbed.

James Hoare



SciFiNow scored **7** for Sláine: The Brutania Chronicles Book 2: Primordial
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

Details **Writer:** Dan Slott **Artist:** Adam Kubert **Publisher:** Panini/Marvel
Price: £12.99 **Released:** Out now

THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN: RENEW YOUR VOWS

Continuity terror

Staying well away from *Secret Wars*, Marvel's lastest self-referencing mega-event? Well never fear, as Spidey continues to do what he does best, skirting around the edges with a story that's entirely his own as he struggles to keep his young family under the radar.

That MJ and Peter are still married here is either a sop to fans still furious about *One More Day*, or, given the nature of Dan Slott, a spot of light trolling, reminding them that this is merely a glimpse through the looking glass.

The totalitarian future with superheroes on the run has a touch of *Age Of Apocalypse* about it, which is fitting, as aside from Web-heads, Slott's other key motif is riffing on the Nineties.

James Hoare



SciFiNow scored **7** for The Amazing Spider-Man: Renew Your Vows
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

Details **Writer:** Des Taylor **Artist:** Des Taylor **Publisher:** Titan **Price:** £10.99 **Released:** Out now

SCARLETT COUTURE

Thunderbollocks

Not fresh enough to qualify as a homage, *Scarlett Couture* has the stale-warm vibes of not the Sixties spy movie it perhaps aspires to ape, but its somewhat po-faced Seventies TV equivalent.

The setup isn't particularly clever – spies-disguised-as-supermodels was pretty much the plot of *Zoolander*, after all – and the story is a cliché-drenched affair, where internal monologues are relied on to heft the plot forward and the 'witty banter' barely holds up as English, let alone as jokes. More embarrassingly, it's seeded with typos and misprints.



Taylor's art, however, is mostly lovely. Characters have fairly limited facial expressions and the women are all popping out of their evening gowns, but it has a pleasant, cel-shaded vibe of Saturday-morning cartoon about it. Sadly, *Scarlett Couture* appears to be a matter of style over substance, as it is beautiful to look at, but sadly lacking in other areas.

James Hoare

SciFiNow scored **3** for Scarlett Couture

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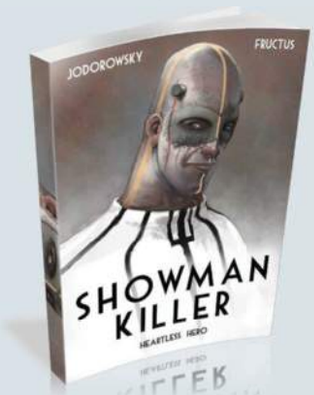
Details **Writer:** Alejandro Jodorowsky **Artist:** Nicolas Fructus **Publisher:** Titan **Price:** £11.99 **Released:** Out now

SHOWMAN KILLER: HEARTLESS HERO

Show, don't tell

It's tempting to wonder if any of *Dune* made it into *Heartless Hero*, and if so, is the lost Frank Herbert adaptation *really* one of sci-fi's great missed opportunities?

In a familiar-looking baroque future, complete with priest-warriors and a pseudo-medieval emperor, a disgruntled scientist collects the sperm of a convicted killer in order to breed the perfect assassin, who unsurprisingly kills him. The titular Showman Killer is every bit as tiresome and unlikeable as a throwaway late-Nineties *2000 AD* back-up strip, able to change his shape/size by rubbing the bolts on his head and letting out an "OVER 9,000" style cry of "SHOWWWWWWW."



Dune is pretty po-faced, but this is somehow even more self-important, like the linear notes on a nu-metal album.

James Hoare

SciFiNow scored **4** for Showman Killer: Heartless Hero

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

Details **Writer:** Serge le Tendre **Artist:** Régis Loisel **Publisher:** Titan **Price:** £29.99 **Released:** Out now

THE QUEST FOR THE TIME BIRD

Flights of fantasy



As you might expect from the cover art, showing buxom Red Sonja-esque heroine Pélisse pulling a sort of coy "What, me?" face on the cover, there's a dated belly laugh bawdiness running throughout Loisel and le Tendre's epic – originally released in four parts between 1983 and 1987 – that risks keeping modern readers at a distance.

Pélisse and her excess estrogen are charged by her sorcerous mother with enlisting an elderly war horse – Bragon, with shades of David Gemmell's Druss – who may or may not be her father, and together they set off to defeat an ancient evil. They're soon joined by the first of two masked toughs, an unknown knight who provides most of the *Carry On* fodder by falling into/off things or getting distracted by Pélisse's chest.

There's much that's familiar to readers of Tolkien, Moorcock et al – riddles over water, realms ruled by sorcerers, duels between apprentices and masters, the corrupting power of magic – but it's a world you soon long to see more of. Loisel has a knack for the earthy and lived in, but there's a sense of horizon-scanning wonder too. Despite its adult nature, *The Quest For The Time Bird* is strangely reminiscent of *Labyrinth*, *Dark Crystal* or *The Neverending Story* for that powerful clash between mythic archetypes and the faded, rusted reality (plus, it's fairly easy to imagine some of the creatures as muppets or grotesque animatics).

It's for that same reason that the characters too begin to warm. In particular, the Pélisse/Bragon relationship takes on ever more resonance, as does the nature of the unknown knight's 'accidental' heroism. It's all about finding out who you really are, and it's not just the masked men who need to discover their true faces.

Do not be fooled by the cover, and take a punt on an old classic.

James Hoare

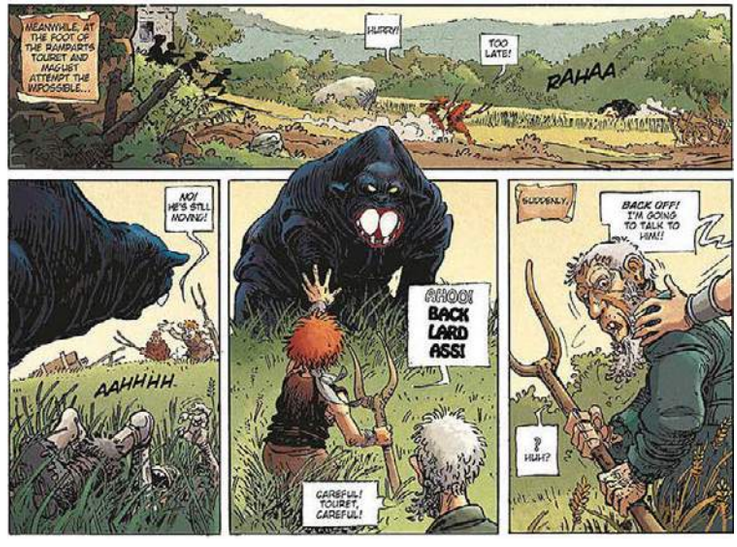
SciFiNow scored **8** for The Quest for the Time Bird

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Savage Sword Of Conan: Volume 1
Roy Thomas/Various
Marvel's Seventies *Conan* series is a cult classic, with great art and Code-swerving content.




RAT
QUEEN

We sit down with the Queen of the Rat Queens herself, Tess Fowler, for a chat about all things swords & sorcery. And sass

WORDS **LAURA SNEDDON**





The cult of a great tentacled old one – surely harmless!

SWORD AND SORCERY TALES AREN'T GENERALLY KNOWN FOR THEIR WELL-ROUNDED PORTRAYALS OF BADASS WOMEN, OR FOR THEIR HUMOUR, FOR THAT matter, but that was before *Rat Queens* came along. The Image Comics series, written by Kurtis J Wiebe, was greeted by almost immediate success upon initial publication in 2013, and replacing the original co-creator with new artists has only broadened its appeal.

The eponymous heroes are a group of four rowdy, obscene adventurers who just happen to have the distinction of being female: Hannah, the rockabilly elven mage whose magic seems distinctly of the dark side; Violet, the dwarven warrior who shaved her beard in an act of rebellion; Dee, the atheist human cleric from a family of Lovecraftian monster cultists; and Betty, a cute Halfling thief who loves candy, drugs and sex – preferably all at the same time.

As artist Tess Fowler puts it, *Rat Queens* is what would emerge if "Tarantino DM'd a *Dungeons & Dragons* game, and all the characters were diverse, foul-mouthed women!"

Fowler, best known previously for her work on various *Grimm Fairy Tales* titles and *Charmed* at Zenescope, along with a plethora of fan-favourite Sketch Cards, joined the *Rat Queens* team from issue #11 after an earlier special featuring Braga the orc. That one-off issue was notable for digging into the back story of one of the series' many side characters, while deliberately putting a different defining moment of Braga's life front and centre in favour of the fact she happens to be trans.

That's something that *Rat Queen* has become renowned for: telling stories about people who don't often have their stories told, but without making their 'otherness' the primary focus. It's something that many readers are fortunate enough to never notice, but for those who often feel like they do not exist within their favourite genre, it's nothing short of revolutionary.

It's clear from talking to Fowler that writer Wiebe was the main draw for her joining the team. "Kurtis has a unique creative voice," she agrees. "It comes through in everything he does. His heart is very much on his sleeve all over the page. I'd read a bit of *Peter Panzerfaust* before *Rat Queens*, so I knew I enjoyed his work. But I didn't know I'd fall in love with it so completely. When reading *Rat Queens* before joining the team I always felt like it was written just for me. Talking to other folks they say the same.

"When I began to work with him on other projects long before *Rat Queens*, I got to know his style and that ever-present big, shiny heart that drives everything he does. I agreed to work on *Rat Queens* because I believe in Kurtis Wiebe."

Coming in after ten issues alongside colourist Tamra Bonvillain is not an unusual happening for many a comics artist, but the balance of forging your own way while adhering to the established characters can be a challenge.



"The girls and world of *Rat Queens* never had a chance to be fully fleshed out," Fowler explains. "There just weren't enough issues. Tamra and I got dropped into a meat grinder of sorts, as there was no beaten path before us and zero time to consult a map. We developed our style based on the visual suggestions of our predecessors, but trekked out on our own into the brush. We had to."

That style is a major shift from the soft paints of previous artist Stjepan Sejic, who left due to ongoing illness. Fowler embraces a more precise style, exaggerating character elements

with bold lines over full realism, which is complemented well by Bonvillain's intricate detailing (blood splatters ahoy!). *Dungeons & Dragons* fans have noted that Fowler has brought a real sense of that background to the series, positioning the series firmly in the realm of fantasy.

The collaboration process between writer, artists and colourist is unique to every project. Fowler, who works traditionally – "I like ink on my fingers. It's tactile. Personal. I'll never convert" – reveals some insight behind the scenes.

"Kurtis and I spent almost two years working together on various pitches, as well as a one-shot for *Rat Queens* smack in the middle," says Fowler. "We are to a point now where he writes a script knowing what I like and what my strengths are, sends it, and I fall madly in love with it right out of the gate. Occasionally he'll consult me first. Or we'll brainstorm here and there. We've mildly argued once about a visual trait of a single character. But I trust him, and I know he won't fight me on something unless it's important. So I have no issue giving ground. I enjoy his work, and I think he challenges me with the gauntlets he throws down script-wise. This, from what I understand, is a rare type of collaboration.

"Tamra Bonvillain is a dream team mate. She's a professional bad-ass colour slinger. And she makes my job easy. Anything I send her way she knocks out of the park. I have started buying comics she works on just so I can enjoy her colours on more than just *Rat Queens*. Together the three of us are having a lot of fun."

With the various artist changes on the series leading to delays for readers, there were worries that stylistic changes might put off already frustrated fans. Instead, Fowler's work has been hailed as a return to form for the series, with a more light-hearted dynamic breaking up the



Time to spend that hard-won gold.



"THE RAT QUEENS GIRLS ARE OUTCASTS THAT BECAME A FAMILY. THAT RESONATES WITH A LOT OF PEOPLE"
TESS FOWLER

In no way is this foreshadowing. Nope.



How to train a dragon: bring candy.





emotional arcs, and even small touches like sprucing up the cast wardrobe going a long way to keep fans invested.

Changing from real armour to street wear for pub scenes may seem non-essential, but the way in which each outfit reflects the characters personality is a great touch.

As is now normal for the comics that boast a huge following, many of the fans contribute mountains of fan art and appreciation online. But the rumble around *Rat Queens* stands out even among applause for other female-led titles like *Ms Marvel* and *Batgirl*.

"There is nothing on comics shelves like *Rat Queens*," Fowler nods. "It arrived on the scene like a bulldozer. The *Rat Queens* girls are outcasts that became a family. That resonates with a lot of people. And it continues to be the most important element of each character."

The leading ladies are definitely unique, cleverly subverting the usual fantasy tropes that women characters are often pigeonholed in, and the larger cast is peppered with a diverse group of all genders, races, shapes and sizes. There are no one-note characters here, with each of our main group in particular having complex and unravelling histories and personalities. Essentially, *Rat Queens* has a character for everyone and interactions that are both relatable and hilarious.

Fowler's other major project is her own web comic, *The Rascals*, starring a young girl called Charlie, her foul-mouthed boozer cat Sam, and her adopted dad Boris the Monster, though lately the comic has been on hiatus.

"*The Rascals* will continue," confirms Fowler. "I plan on that being what I work on well into my old lady years. *Rat Queens* is different to work on because it's a roller coaster. I'm just holding on for dear life and trying not to miss the joy as I'm white-knuckling the corkscrews and loops!"

The artist is also well known for making a public stand against harassment faced by women in comics by refusing to remain silent on her own experiences and facing down the unsurprising but still shocking avalanche of abuse that followed. As a direct result, things have improved slightly within the comics industry since then, as people feel more secure in their ability to speak out, but it's still a daunting profession for many looking to join the medium.

"Make your own comics," is Fowler's advice. "Use the internet to find your audience. There is no longer any such thing as 'breaking in'. You make your comics and your comic tribe finds you. The misogyny and sexism and racism and classism and transphobia? Those aren't going anywhere. But we're building other sandboxes. You should too. Nice ones free of the old guard."



What's a little heart attack between friends?



Move over Hogwarts, this place is banging!



In fantasy, always trust the naked ladies.

In the past year, more cases of harassment in comics have been revealed, as well as incidents of bigotry within the comic pages themselves that have been pointed out by fans. Unlike even a few years ago, some creators are listening.

"I think changes are happening. Not fast enough or widespread enough for my tastes. But the rumblings exist. New sandboxes are being created. New ideas are blooming. The old guard is getting older. And the new blood will outlast them. Sadly, it means many free thinkers suffer in the meantime, as the old guard tries ever harder to stop the forward momentum of progress. But this is why we must hold tight to our fellow rebels. We must make comics together and keep each other strong. The light of a new comics age is dawning. Can't you feel it?"

What can we expect next from Tess Fowler?

"*Rat Queens* is getting back to basics in the next arc. Expect monsters, mayhem and magic. Heavy on the mayhem!"

Rat Queens: Volume 3 - Demons will be released on 21 April.

The new age

Swords & sorcery abound in whatever flavour you desire



Conan (Dark Horse, Marvel)
Roy Thomas, Barry Windsor-Smith et al
You can't have sword & sorcery comics without Conan the Barbarian. Begin with Marvel's old *Savage Sword* series or skip forward to *The Tower Of The Elephant* by Kurt Busiek and Cary Nord.



Mouse Guard (Archaia)
David Petersen
The astounding artwork and captivating story has led to comparisons with such classics as *The Lord Of The Rings*. Begin with *Mouse Guard: Fall 1152* and you'll soon be buying the RPG sets!



Orc Stain (Image)
James Stokoe
A genuine hidden gem, with just one collected edition out from the indie king of cartooning. In a world plagued by endless wars between orcish hordes, One-Eye the orc is our potential hero – a scrawny thief.



Saga (Image)
Brian K Vaughan, Fiona Staples
Image's second best-selling comic behind *The Walking Dead*, this is the perfect blend of sci-fi and fantasy with an extraordinary cast of characters. Hailed as the best comic of this century.



Nimona (HarperCollins)
Noelle Stevenson
Recommended for all ages, this is a fabulously subversive, sharp and hilarious take on the noble career of supervillainy.



Dungeons & Dragons (IDW)
John Rogers, Andrea Di Vito et al
Collected across three volumes, this series is described as the first *D&D* comic that feels as if it is written by actual players.

From the makers of **SciFiNow**



SciFiNow ANNUAL

Not that long ago, in a magazine not that far away, was a brilliant year in sci-fi! Celebrate a year of the best films and television, get excited about *The Force Awakens* and save your city with DC's TV heroes and so much more!



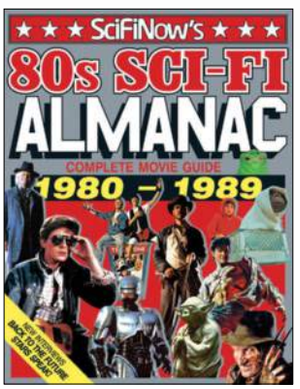
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AN IMAGINE MONTHLY



"THERE WAS NOTHING LIKE IT AT THE TIME, AND THERE'S BEEN NOTHING LIKE IT SINCE"

DAVID RICHARDSON

All images © STUDIOCANAL FILMS LIMITED (1961-1969)

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO THE AVENGERS

THE AVENGERS WILL FOREVER BE REMEMBERED FONDLY FOR ITS LARGER-THAN LIFE STORIES, QUINTESSENTIALLY BRITISH OUTLOOK AND THE TIMELESS DYNAMIC BETWEEN EMMA PEEL AND JOHN STEED. WE GO BACK TO A TIME WHEN THE WORDS "MRS PEEL, WE'RE NEEDED" SPELLED FRENETIC FUN…

WORDS **CHRIS CHANTLER**

In September 1965, a Pathe News film crew assembled to cover the launch of a new high-street fashion range by English designer John Bates (trading under Jean Varon). The ladies' attire on display – described in the plummy commentary as "Way-out gear for mod maidens" – had been designed for Mrs Emma Peel, a fictional crime-fighter, businesswoman, physicist and kung-fu expert, about to make her debut as the new companion for debonair secret agent John Steed in ABC TV's quirky spy fantasy *The Avengers*. Also that month, the trendiest model of the age, Jean Shrimpton, was snapped by the trendiest photographer of the age, David Bailey, wearing garments from Jean Varon's 'Avengers Collection' in a photo shoot for *Vogue*.

But if Emma Peel was designed to be an icon, TV's most radical and empowered female role model, the precedent had already been set by her predecessor, Dr Catherine Gale. Anthropologist, British Museum curator, leather-clad biker, farmer, charity worker and judo dynamo, Cathy's impact was immediate and profound. By September 1963, Ruth Makhlouf was able to gush in *Reveille Magazine*: "Some say that the new image she puts over on television of the 20th Century woman has done as much for the emancipation of women as those worthy ladies who tied themselves to railings in the days of Mrs Pankhurst."

It's a remarkable legacy, but one that would have been unimaginable just two years earlier. When *The Avengers* debuted on the UK's only commercial channel in January 1961, its star was Ian Hendry, playing the hero and emotional focus, Dr David Keel. When the stoical, virtuous GP's fiancée is gunned down in the street by heroin dealers, mysterious civil servant John Steed embroils the grieving medic in an undercover bid to expose the killers: this is what the Avengers were originally avenging. In advance publicity, both men were photographed in grey raincoats, smoking cigarettes in a London backstreet. The development of *The Avengers*, from that first on-the-hoof photo shoot to the newsreel announcement of Jean Varon's 'Avengers Collection', represents perhaps the most extraordinary creative evolution in TV history.

In 1960, Ian Hendry's self-explanatory ITV vehicle *Police Surgeon* hadn't caught on, but its star had impressed bosses and viewers. Series producer Leonard White brought in Canadian TV guru Sydney Newman to brainstorm a new format for Hendry, retaining the medical credentials but coining a much snazzier name ("I don't know what it means," confessed Newman, "but it's a hell of a good title!"). They also devised a subsidiary lead to partner Hendry, and Newman knew just the actor to play him. Patrick Macnee had worked with Newman in Canada, and after a 20-year acting career spanning the Atlantic, Macnee had given up on stardom and moved into TV production. He rightly refused to grow the moustache that Newman suggested for the character of Steed, but this instinctive casting was one of Newman's most inspired brainwaves – and there are few TV brains more wavy than his.

As with *Doctor Who* – that other immortal storytelling premise Newman scribbled onto a napkin in the early Sixties – our first glimpses of Steed are ambiguous and faintly sinister. Despite his introductory assurance that "I'm on the side of the angels", often in the first series we're not sure if we can trust him. His casual manipulation of unwitting young women nearly earns him a beating from Keel at the thrilling conclusion of 'Toy Trap' after Steed inveigles the help of a teenage girl in Keel's care to infiltrate a call-girl racket. Asked by Keel if he's "ever heard of the end not justifying the means?" Steed replies with a breezy "Oh do me a favour." For those who came to Steed as the unimpeachable gent of the Peel era, this more cynical, ruthless antihero with his overt lascivious compulsions can be a shock, as can the realisation that James Bond's cinematic debut was still over a year away.



Mrs Peel investigates a curious plot device.

Hindsight suggests that maybe Steed needed a strong woman to take him in hand. The show's first female regular, Keel's secretary Carol, was talked up in early PR, actress Ingrid Hafner sharing magazine covers with the male leads. Carol is a lively and important presence in Series One, if often pushed out of her depth by nonchalant puppet-master Steed. When an Equity strike held up production after 26 episodes, Hendry left to concentrate on movie offers, but producers were already devising a part-time female assistant for Steed: nightclub singer Venus Smith. Although Julie Stevens gave a spirited performance with some cracking lines, too often Venus is another credulous pawn for Steed to put blundering into harm's way. What's worse, she gets to sing a succession of flat jazz numbers that pointlessly stall narrative momentum.

The breakthrough came when Leonard White resolved to take the toughness, intelligence and ethical zeal of Dr Keel – the emotional complexities and specialised knowledge that Steed lacked – and give them to a woman, a staring-them-in-the-face revelation with revolutionary consequences. Quite apart from its briskly underplayed gender subversion, Honor Blackman's debut as Cathy Gale in 'Mr Teddy Bear' immediately took *The Avengers* to a far stranger place. The 'Avengerland' of Series One was a seedy underworld of gangland razor-slashings – "The

accent in the scripts is on authenticity," Ian Hendry had promised in 1961. By the time Cathy faces off against an animatronic stuffed toy – the mechanical mouthpiece of a mercenary assassin – the offbeat, high-concept tongue-in-cheek that came to be *The Avengers*' stylistic legacy had begun sliding into place.

It took a while though. As well as six variable adventures with Venus Smith, three leftover Keel scripts were (barely) rewritten for Jon Rollason's Dr King. Even when Cathy became established as Steed's full-time partner, the stories remain a little uneven, but there is always intensely watchable chemistry between Blackman and Macnee. Although *The Avengers* still had its share of diamond smugglers and stolen documents, Series Two's best episodes were the quirkier curveballs. In 'The White Dwarf', Steed and Gale contemplate the imminent destruction of Earth with instinctively stiff upper lips, while 'Warlock' augments its well-worn theme of selling state secrets with a spooky occult backdrop ("The writers of the series deserve a good mark for finding yet another out-of-the-rut setting for their good-humoured thrillers," said a contemporary review). 'Warlock' was the sole *Avengers* script by Doreen Montgomery, surely *The Avengers*' unsung heroine. Having helped establish Cathy's character, she returned in 1965 to devise the role of Emma Peel.

The Avengers' reputation for action, style, wit and left-field inventiveness was largely forged during the third series, which saw the show consolidating its strengths. The leather suits and knee-high boots worn by Blackman caused a national sensation, bringing fetish wear to the mainstream and inspiring Macnee and Blackman's cheerfully awful novelty single 'Kinky Boots'. The fight scenes became more elaborate and confident; Blackman made front-page news when she accidentally knocked out wrestler Jackie Pallo while filming series highlight 'Mandrake' – he was unconscious for nearly eight minutes. Complaints were raised when the show was scheduled against the BBC's first satirical revue *That Was The Week That Was*; for a while in 1963, two of the hippest, most innovative and far-reaching programmes in TV history were head-to-head on Saturday nights.



Mind control was a recurring motif.

The show had by now built up a stable of dependable writers, keen to subvert clichés and find imaginative twists on familiar ideas and conventions. Many of these master storytellers – Terrance Dicks, Malcolm Hulke, Bill Strutton, Dennis Spooner, John Lucarotti – became better known for their subsequent work on *Doctor Who*, but the writer who most powerfully grasped *The Avengers*' own distinctive magic was Brian Clemens. As well as bold series opener 'Brief For Murder', he had scripted haunting Cathy-centric character study 'Don't Look Behind You' and bikers-versus-witches caper 'Build A Better Mousetrap'. Writers were still honing the complex relationship between Steed and Gale when Blackman announced her decision to leave the series in March 1963. Not even tentative plans for an *Avengers* movie and stage musical could dissuade her: "The thing is not to stay so long you forget what you can do," she explained to *Weekly News*.

Replacing such a popular and pivotal figure wouldn't be easy. Indeed, it was so difficult that they got it wrong. Over 60 actresses auditioned before Elizabeth Shepherd was cast as Steed's new partner Emma Peel, intended to be "warmer and wittier" than Cathy. An entire episode was filmed (literally; Series Four was

shot entirely on 35mm film, a move often urged by Blackman, whose episodes were shot on cheaper, lower quality videotape) before producers realised that it wasn't working and let Shepherd go. She clashed with producers over scripts and costumes, but hindsight suggests she was never going to feel right as Peel because she wasn't Diana Rigg. The real Mrs Peel only strolled in after another 20 auditions, and when she did her first test scene with Macnee we can only imagine the relief on producer Julian Wintle's face. Now alongside him on the production team was Clemens, shrewdly promoted due in part to his innate understanding of *The Avengers* and its potential – which it was about to fulfil in joyous spades.

Although Peel's leather-catsuited martial artistry harked back to the formula established by her predecessor, her relationship with Steed was entirely different. With Cathy, there was often a prickliness arising out of Steed's undisguised lust and ethical laxity, but in Series Four there are no such seedy foibles blotting his form. It's not quite that he's tamed by Mrs Peel (her husband, a test pilot, was missing presumed dead), but both actors and characters visibly enjoy each other's company, and their light flirtatious badinage has a thoroughly mutual relish. Now, *The Avengers* had financial support from American TV, becoming the first British series to network in US prime-time. Over 70 countries came to be entranced by Steed and Peel during Rigg's tenure, this fantastical vision of Sixties Britain coming to represent an off-kilter archetype of the nation at the height of its pop-cultural dominance.

By the time Steed and Mrs Peel investigate the 'Man-Eater Of Surrey Green' in December 1965, *The Avengers* had evolved from collaring smack dealers to telepathic killer plants from space. This new sci-fi focus must have excited the Americans; they scheduled killer-robot classic 'The Cybernauts' as the show's US TV debut. Emma was trapped in a psychedelic mechanical rotating prison in 'The House That Jack Built', and Steed's mind was assaulted by destructive telepaths in the Dickens-themed 'Too Many Christmas Trees'. The show's arch mingling of texts, genres and modes proved incalculably influential, as well as hugely popular with contemporary audiences: in January 1966, *Punch* magazine declared, "The mad predicaments and loony decors get better and better and the infiltration of sci-fi has unexpectedly come off."

"THE AVENGERS' REPUTATION WAS LARGELY FORGED DURING THE THIRD SERIES"



Steed on the blower, sans the bowler.



Early on, Steed was a roguish manipulator.

THE AVENGERS' TOP 5 DIABOLICAL MASTERMINDS

Introducing the series' foremost cackling cads



1 SIR BRUNO LUCER
(Hugh Burden)

'THE GRANDEUR THAT WAS ROME'

A fertiliser magnate obsessed with the Roman Empire, Lucer plotted to decimate mankind with a new bubonic plague in order to rule the world as a modern Caesar.



2 MAX PRENDERGAST
(Peter Jeffrey)

'THE JOKER'

An old adversary, captured after becoming infatuated with Mrs Peel and imprisoned for crimes against humanity. Now escaped, this embittered psychopath has been plotting the mental torment and slow death of the woman who bested him.



3 THE BUSINESS EFFICIENCY BUREAU

'THE FEAR MERCHANTS'

Three for the price of one! This icy triumvirate, engineering baroque nervous breakdowns for cash, prove that cold-blooded evil exists most plausibly in the office blocks of corporate bureaucracy. You'll never trust a market research team again.



4 WALDO THYSSEN
(Peter Bowles)

'ESCAPE IN TIME'

Sitcom smoothie Peter Bowles enjoys himself as this obsessive schizoid loony posing as a genial eccentric with a time machine. Acting out a dysfunctional family tree of rogues, he relishes Matthew, a brutal, sexual sadist from the Tudor era.



5 PAUL BERESFORD
(Peter Cushing)

'RETURN OF THE CYBERNAUTS'

An outstanding performance by Peter Cushing, introduced as a silky-smooth friend to Steed and Peel. However, Beresford's brother was thwarted Cybernaut inventor Dr Armstrong, and Paul has been devising the most sadistic revenge imaginable.



Middle East diplomacy, *Avengers* style.

COMPLETE GUIDE TO THE AVENGERS



Series Five was made in colour; the predicaments got madder, the decors loonier and the sci-fi infiltrated even further. Along with a new range of vivid fashions for Peel (including multi-coloured Crimplene jumpsuits marketed as 'Emmapeelers') came an even more outlandish comic-book approach encompassing superheroes, shrink rays, time machines, mind-swap devices and invisible men. Often, these proto-*Danger Mouse* tropes turn out to be spectacularly elaborate hoaxes, but plots were secondary to the show's bold visual panache, effervescent comic dialogue and, most crucially, the blissful chemistry of the two leads. So when Rigg resigned in April 1967, citing dissatisfaction over treatment and pay and disillusionment with stardom, the production team would have been forgiven for going into total screaming meltdown. Which is seemingly what happened.

The full truth about the 1967 back-room crisis remains largely a mystery, but differences had developed between producers and executives about the show's future direction. There were some concerns that the fantastical excesses should be reined in and a degree of reality restored, and even that Emma's strength had detracted from Steed's manly heroism. The upshot was that producers Brian Clemens and Albert Fennell were sacked. John Bryce, who produced most of the Cathy Gale episodes, was brought back to oversee the sixth series and the onerous task of casting Rigg's successor. 200 actresses were auditioned before Canadian unknown Linda Thorson clinched the role, naming herself Tara King, and confessing her anxiety to *TVue* magazine: "I've felt very concerned about how viewers would react, because I had been made very aware of their feelings for Diana," she revealed. "It will take a while for some of them to accept the change in their heads." America's prosaically named *TV Magazine* issued a doom-laden proclamation that *The Avengers* was "about to suffer what could be a fatal cast change," ominously concluding, "How soon will it die? Much depends on how quickly Linda Thorson can make its fans forget Diana Rigg." Realistically though, how could they ever?

After filming three episodes, production collapsed. Fennell and Clemens were brought back to remount

THE AVENGERS TOP 10 EPISODES Ranking the best



1. 'THE HIDDEN TIGER' (MAR 1967)

"Pussies galore!" Ronnie Barker's cat-rescue home is the centre of a magnificently ludicrous plot to turn domestic moggies into man-eating killers. A feel-good feline frolic exemplifying prime *Avengers*.



2. 'THE HOUR THAT NEVER WAS' (NOV 1965)

An eerie aura is cast by the abandoned airfield and temporal puzzlement. Roy Kinnear gives a fine performance, while the climactic punch-up is a scream.



3. 'TOO MANY CHRISTMAS TREES' (DEC 1965)

A Dickensian seasonal treat. A gang of ruthless telepaths are bent on infiltrating and destroying Steed's mind. He keeps them at bay by singing old English folk songs.



4. 'THE NUTSHELL' (OCT 1963)

A traitor at large in a claustrophobic nuclear bunker: the perfect setting for a tense, gripping espionage thriller that makes Cathy – and the viewer – question what we know about the mysterious Mr Steed.



5. 'THE CYBERNAUTS' (OCT 1965)

This mad-scientist-plus-killer-robot classic spawned the series' only recurring foes, and aired 12 months before the Doctor first encountered the Cybermen.

the series, and set about pushing the show even further off the psychedelic deep-end. Steed was given an on-screen superior for the first time since the men in grey suits of the early seasons, with Patrick Newell's bluff wheelchair-bound Mother popping up in a range of improbable locales that anticipate John Cleese's desk in *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. Clemens was never fond of Tara, who remains a divisive character, but after Blackman and Rigg's ice-cool brain-box dominatrixes it made sense to try a more human and vulnerable character, and for Steed's relationship with his 20-year-old assistant to be more avuncular and protective. There are many fine Tara episodes, and Thorson does an especially engaging job taking control of the action in sublime showcase 'All Done With Mirrors', but by now *The Avengers* was feeding off its own *Avengers*ness, repetition and self-parody creeping in as American support dwindled. Without sufficient funding, the Avengers were last seen blasting into space in arbitrarily titled series finale 'Bizarre'. It was May 1969; like the Beatles, *The Avengers* began and ended with the Sixties.

"IN SERIES FIVE THE SCI-FI INFILTRATED EVEN FURTHER"

Except it didn't, of course. Demand for *The Avengers* remained high throughout the Seventies: a stage play reached the West End in 1971, the show was skilfully adapted for radio in South Africa, and regular repeats kept it fresh in the world's memory. When Macnee and Thorson reprised their roles for a French champagne commercial in 1975, its director Rudolph Roffi didn't realise *The Avengers* had ended six years earlier due to lack of funds; he rang Clemens soon after to announce that new funds had been found. With Macnee, Clemens and Fennell back on board, the old team set about forming *The New Avengers*, with French and Canadian backing that would eventually confuse and compromise the project. Joanna Lumley's



The storylines were often mind-boggling.



Even at gunpoint, Mrs Peel is in control.



Avenger assemblies



6. 'WHO'S WHO??' (MAY 1967)

More absurd sci-fi convolutions allow Macnee and Rigg to camp it up as a pair of dancing, kissing, gum-chewing enemy agent lovers. They've switched bodies with our heroes, and are clearly loving it.



7. 'BUILD A BIGGER MOUSETRAP' (FEB 1964)

An early glimpse of *The Avengers*' true eccentricity: a teenage biker gang is cursed by witches, while Steed poses as a representative of the 'National Distrust'.



8. 'BRIEF FOR MURDER' (SEP 1963)

Steed clashes with Cathy, then appears to arrange and execute her murder. The crusty, amoral Lakin brothers are a delight, as was the *TV Times* coverage, treating the story like a real legal trial.



9. 'LOOK...' (DEC 1968)

Dennis Spooner's most comedic script was divisive. But there's a terrific early study in controlled panic from John Cleese, Bernard Cribbins as a hack gag writer, lethal custard pies, and an evil pantomime horse.



10. 'DEAD MEN ARE DANGEROUS' (NOV 1978)

The New Avengers provided our most thorough, profound examination of Steed. "The only thing that can't be replaced is the love and life of an old friend."



"SO MANY THINGS TRY TO BE 'COOL' AND FALL SHORT, BUT THE AVENGERS WAS JUST COOL"
DAVID RICHARDSON



THE NEW OLD AVENGERS

Steed & Peel will live on, thanks to Big Finish

"Our approach was to be as authentic as possible," says Big Finish producer David Richardson on the task of remaking *Avengers* TV scripts from 1961 in sound only. "It became a fun challenge to try and make live Sixties black-and-white television on audio!"

One potential problem he solved instantly, as his instinctive dream team – Julian Wadham as Steed and Anthony Howell as Keel – quickly jumped on board. How well did the scripts stand up after all that time? "Very well indeed. I've often heard Julian Wadham say that they are an example of very good writing. And Julian [sees] a lot of scripts, as he's a very busy actor! They're stylistically very different to the later – and better known – series of *The Avengers*, but they certainly stand tall in their own right."

Delightfully, they're also producing audio dramatisations of mid-Sixties *Avengers* comic strips, featuring Olivia Poulet as the voice of Emma Peel, to launch in April. "The only challenge was that many of the strips are just eight pages long," says David. "But they were fully formed adventures with really rich ideas and great set pieces, so it wasn't much of a stretch to expand that to a full episode. Audio is a very visual medium – the sounds create the images in our minds."



Purdey certainly had the magnetism and vitality needed for an '*Avengers* girl' (and a practical pudding-bowl haircut that overshadowed the whole programme in popular memory). However, 50-something playboy Steed ceded much of the action to Gareth Hunt's Mike Gambit, a skirt-chasing, fist-throwing avatar of Seventies Crime-fighting Man, later extrapolated by Clemens and Fennell into the macho-camp pomposity of *The Professionals*.

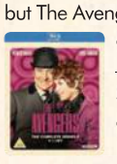
Tonally, *The New Avengers* varied hugely, from out-and-out farce to brow-furrowed self-importance. As ever, excellent guest stars helped: Peter Cushing added a touch of class to the well-worn cryonic-Nazi theme of fun series opener 'The Eagle's Nest', Ian Hendry made an emotional return as a troubled double agent in 'To Tame A Rat', and a much-loved enemy re-stomped old ground in the oddly wistful 'Last Of The Cybernauts…??'. However, by the time Gambit and Purdey started burning rubber around the nondescript streets of Toronto at the end of a second series stymied by a surfeit of international interests, some essence had been lost.

Rumours of an American remake, another sequel (rebadged as *Avengers International*), a Purdey/Gambit spin-off and a motion picture regularly surfaced throughout the Eighties and Nineties. The latter finally emerged amid a glut of Sixties remake nostalgia in 1998, with Ralph Fiennes and Uma Thurman attempting to fill the iconic bowler and catsuit. A glossy mess randomly scattered with Peel-era tropes, rendered illegible by copious editing, the well-intentioned film was a critical and commercial disaster that seemingly killed off any mainstream interest in reviving the brand.

This would make for a very downbeat conclusion, but since its 50th anniversary in 2011, *The Avengers* has come full circle in heartening style. For the first time since 1961, we are able to experience the 26 episodes of the first series – only two-and-a-bit of which still exist on videotape – as audio dramas from Big Finish. Finally, we can understand the full context and potential of the show's dim and distant origins, and as Ian Hendry once said, "The accent is on authenticity." The tightly plotted, dialogue-led, studio-bound scripts of that era translate perfectly to audio, and although these 'lost episodes' depict an *Avengers* that is very different from the one that conquered the world, it's clear there was always an urge for this show to go beyond the ordinary, to intrigue and surprise, to tell "vigorous and fast-moving stories" and "avoid cliches", as producer Leonard White promised TV Times in 1961.


Emma Peel: style to die for.

"The Avengers is one of those British national treasures – there was nothing quite like it at the time, and there's been nothing like it since," enthuses audio series producer David Richardson. "It is unique. So many things try to be 'cool' and fall short of the mark, but The Avengers just was cool. And witty, and colourful, and exciting…"



Series One to Three of *The Avengers* are available to buy on DVD, while Series Four, Five and Six are out on Blu-ray.

INTERVIEW

PHIL TIPPETT: DESIGNS ON THE FANTASTIC

THE LEGENDARY VISUAL EFFECTS MAESTRO LOOKS BACK ON HIS SPECIAL-EFFECTS WORK FOR THE MUCH-LOVED FANTASY MOVIE, DRAGONHEART

WORDS **JAMES CLARKE**

On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the fantasy epic *Dragonheart*, originally released globally in summer 1996, we spoke with legendary animator and visual effects pioneer Phil Tippett about what it takes to create a believable fantasy character. *Dragonheart* has one of the most expressive dragons seen in a movie, and remains a striking example of a moment in time when high fantasy was not as familiar a part of the genre landscape.

Cinema has enjoyed a long-standing relationship with conjuring dragons and plenty of other mythical creatures, and currently we perhaps take for granted how often they make their way into a fantasy movie or TV series. Once upon a time, it wasn't always this way: a dragon was a rare sight, and one to be cherished when it came into view. In 1981 there had been the landmark high fantasy movie *Dragonslayer*. In 1984 there had been the Luck Dragon of *The Neverending Story*, and in 1988 there was the two-headed Eborsisk dragon of *Willow* (also animated by Tippett). Back in 1977 there had been *Pete's Dragon* and before that the dragon in Disney's *Sleeping Beauty* (1959). The role of the dragon in myth and legend is enduring and hugely alluring.

Dragonheart had been in development since 1989 when its producer, Rafaella de Laurentiis, began to pitch it to studios. Its central conceit of a talking dragon made the film a hard sell both as a believable scenario and a visual effects challenge. Directors who considered the project included Kenneth Branagh, Richard Donner and Jon Avnet. Actors who were approached to star in the film expressed concern that they might be upstaged by the dragon. The film's eventual director, Rob Cohen, had directed *Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story* and the Sylvester Stallone movie, *Daylight*.

Tippett has a career-long track record of bringing a vast range of beasts to the movie screen. One of his earliest feature film showcases was animating the chessboard pieces that make a fleeting appearance in *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977), a detail that adds to the richness of George Lucas's movie universe. After *Star Wars*, Tippett remained heavily involved with Industrial Light & Magic, animating the Tauntaun on which Luke Skywalker first appears in *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980) and working on the AT-AT walkers for the Hoth battle in that same film.

Tippett also worked as part of the team at ILM, animating the dragon Vermithrax Pejorative for the movie *Dragonslayer*. For *Return Of The Jedi* (1983), Tippett supervised The Creature Shop and animated the Rancor. The believability that Tippett brought to this intergalactic bestiary was a trademark of his work, and he continued to furnish the fantasy and science fiction genres with memorably animated characters, notably ED209 in *RoboCop* (1987) and the killer bugs in *Starship Troopers* (1997). Between these two collaborations with Paul Verhoeven, Tippett worked on *Jurassic Park* (1993). Originally, he was to have provided subtly animated armatured stop-motion dinosaurs, but these were superceded by the rapidly evolving digital work. Nonetheless, Tippett remained on board the film under the title 'dinosaur supervisor', overseeing the interface between the stop-motion animation work and the new world of digitally animating characters and creatures.

In the Nineties, the evolution in visual effects marked a watershed moment in what was achievable, and one of the lavishly produced fantasy movies that showcased what artists could render using digital tools was *Dragonheart*, written by Patrick Read Johnson and Charles Pogue and directed by Rob Cohen. The film's story charts the buddy-movie dynamic between a down-on-his-luck medieval warrior named Bowen (Dennis Quaid), with a magnificent dragon (voiced by Sean Connery) named Draco as they challenge the tyrannical rule of King Einon (David Thewlis). Aided by a monk named Gilbert (Pete Postlethwaite) and a young woman called Kara (Dina Meyer), they go through the vintage rollercoaster of a fantasy adventure, encountering danger and magic along the way.

"I got a call" is how Tippett begins his recollection of his work to create Draco. "I was put in contact with

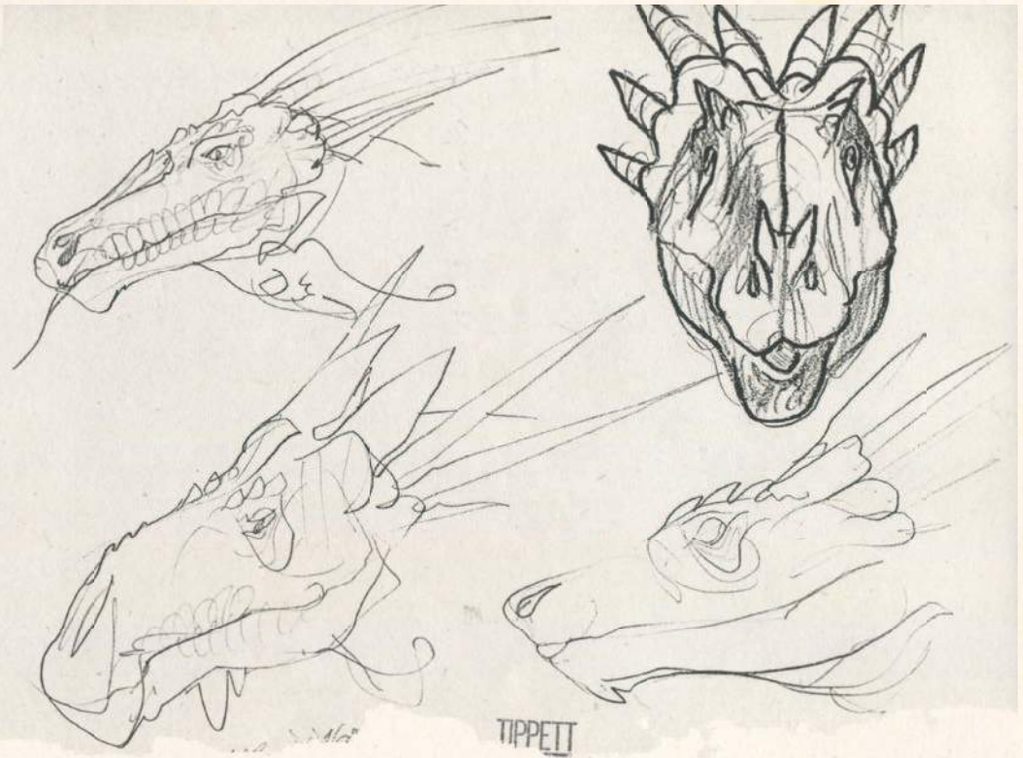


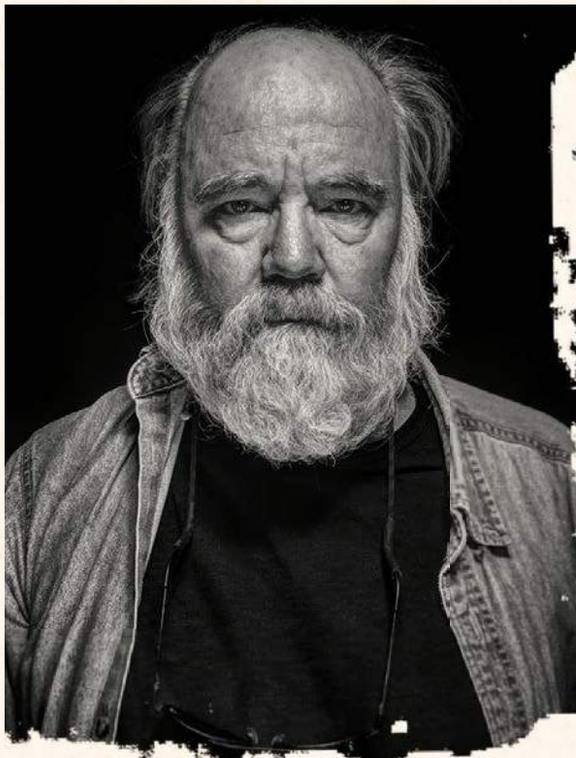
Peter Konig finished textural detail on a Draco wing for the character maquette.

"HARDLY ANYONE HAD DONE THIS FANTASY ANIMAL"

PHIL TIPPETT







ENGINEERING THE FANTASTIC

ANECDOTES FROM TIPPETT'S TIME ON HIS BIGGEST FILMS



Dragonheart

For *Dragonheart*'s realisation of the character of Draco, a truly imposing figure with the utmost possible gravitas was required. Enter the legendary Sean Connery, and it's safe to say that he more than played his part. Tippett recalls, "All the voice recording was done with a reference camera on Sean Connery to see how his mouth moved. The dialogue drove the face."



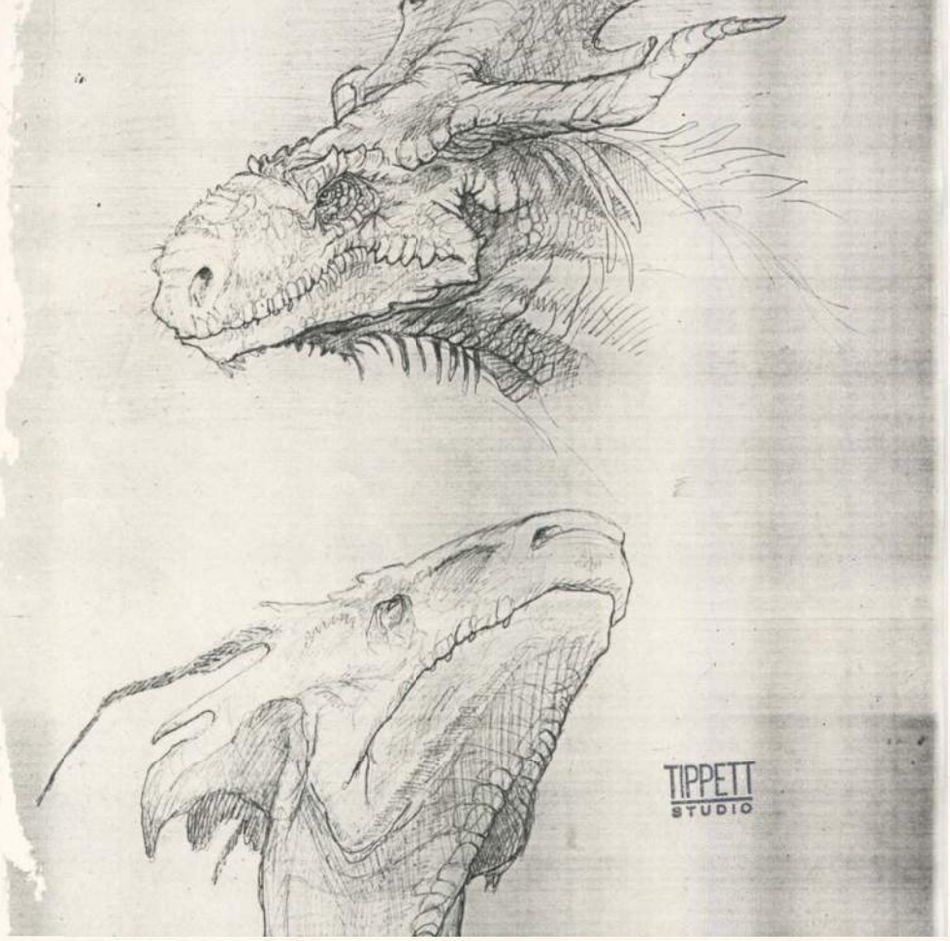
Star Wars and Jurassic Park

Phil recalls how, when working with George Lucas on the *Star Wars* movies Industrial Light & Magic developed an early days pre-viz system that would provide rough versions of visual effects sequences "so that editorial had something to use." This inexpensive process laid the groundwork for more refined approaches at plotting out elaborate visual effects sequences in the years to come. Phil recalls, "On *Jurassic*, Steven Spielberg and Kathleen Kennedy didn't want to stumble (in principal photography), so we invested in doing key scenes as animation."



Honest Illusions

Phil observes that "Making a fanciful thing takes an engineering process: when I was working on *Return Of The Jedi* I had designed a little creature that played this organ. I had built this outfit and got into it, and George chose to use Superfreak for the temp track and we were pantomiming it. My wife walked in, saw it and said, "It doesn't work. " The creature was duly realised as a puppet, and the Max Rebo band was born.





2D drawings of Draco become a clay maquette in-process.

The wingless Draco maquette at the Tippett Studio.



Rob Cohen, who had been working with ILM on the dragon. He wanted me to do a take on it, and I went down for a series of meetings. It was kind of the normal process: since the character had to speak, that drove a lot of design ideas. I brought a ton of reference picture of sculptures of dragons through history. The direction I wanted to go was like a Chinese dragon who guarded the palace; it was the closest thing to what I wanted." De Laurentiis, however, was totally against the proposed east-Asian approach to the film's digitally animated star, and Tippett found himself having to rethink the essentials.

With the original concept no longer viable, Tippett worked with sculptor Pete Konig to revise the design gameplan. Tippett recalls how they "started throwing together sketches", a process that "refined and defined central problematics." On the configuration of Draco's mouth, Tippett explains that they "couldn't do a crocodile or lizard, as there's no articulation. I had Pete design around a simian face and some attributes that were anthropoid. The face wasn't long; it was much more compact. In initial ILM designs, the dragon had front legs. It walked on its wing. I was talking to Francis Ford Coppola, and he told me a historical thing about the 1:44 aspect ratio in the silent era: it allowed plenty of room for performers to use their hands. I took that, and proposed that the wings on Draco be a separate kind of thing: have its forelegs be free and use its hands." With the wing design emerging as a separate element in the look of Draco, Tippett notes that, "It was a beefier character. The wingfold would have to be big enough to hold this thing up, but they also had to be compact enough. That became a huge ongoing project."

Tippett stresses that, "Our part in *Dragonheart* was totally in the pre-production world." Of the process, he explains. "We built a rudimentary CG dragon to work out a walk-cycle. At this time, our CG resources were pretty minimal. Pete Konig (animator and concept artist) had just started to learn how to redirect some of the joints using CG wireframe models, and then Rob asked

us to do several key scene animations. The stop-motion guys knew how to do that stuff."

Tippett recalls how they were contending with the limitations of current technology and the untested possibilities of the newly emerging digital visual effects palette. On *Jurassic Park*, Tippett and his team had designed and applied a tool dubbed 'the dinosaur input device' that allied an armature stop-motion model, albeit without the look of a dinosaur, with the animator's computer so that the stop motion moves could be matched in the digital world as a wireframe model.

On *Dragonheart*, they didn't have the input devices. However, another approach announced itself, which looking back must have seemed fairly bold, but anticipated a visual effects process that is now a very well-established approach. "So I did the 'mo-cap' approach. Craig Hayes built an early motion capture suit." Tippett observes, "At the time, hardly any animation had done this kind of fantasy animal. There were a number of things you had to take into consideration. I had a performance artist friend – Leonard Pitt – and put him in this encoded skeleton for performance protocol." From this mo-cap method, Tippett and his team were able to determine the rhythms and characterisation for Draco.

"Once we determined the design approach, Pete Konig built a 3/8 scale complete, finished dragon: one with folded, and one with wings extended. We took it down to Rob and Rafaella de Laurentiis for a pitch meeting at the studio, and they had this maquette to show Universal Pictures. Then, Peter Konig and I spent a couple of months building a dragon that was about four feet long, and that got scanned at ILM. There was a grey one and then a painted one for texture and surface. Pete came up with five or six different designs. ILM's visual effects supervisor, Steve Price, and I went to Rob Cohen and we started talking. We created a number of different poses: a lying down pose and a talking pose, for example. Rob picked one special thing, and then we started getting into the detail. On *Jurassic Park*, my responsibility was in performance and animation." Tippett notes that on that movie for ILM "lots of things worked in their favour: the dinosaurs' surfaces were pretty contiguous and made for easy mapping of textures. On *Dragonheart*, it was the whole aesthetic thing of detailing this; we were dealing with lots of spines, lots of plates, a lot of surface detail, like a topography, like a landscape."

Of the intricate design choices for Draco's armour-plated exterior, Tippett explains how it made for an appealing visual flourish for the dragon: "A lot of research we did in painting, to get a sort of fluorescent thing; you could see a rainbow coming and going on the surface of the wing." If you look carefully at the original release poster for the movie, you'll see some indication of that rainbow colouring in the image.

In talking with Tippett about his recollections of *Dragonheart*, it becomes how clear he regards it as an essential bridge between the *Jurassic Park* moment and the refinements that developed over the ensuing 20 years in creating digital characters. Encapsulating his experience on the film and more generally as an animator and designer, Tippett notes, "I generally like to not start with 2D work, but what happens is that you end up circling through a bunch of idea that get negotiated into a composite. Don't negotiate down to the worst possible choice. Try and get a gestalt of the thing and see very concretely what this thing is."

Once the development work on Draco was complete, Tippett and his crew had finished their work on the movie. The film production shot on location in Europe and post-production on the film, as ILM animated and integrated the Tippett-designed Draco into the film, then ran for about 18 months.

Tippett's concept for a fully expressive and distinct dragon that was both familiar and new became the standout part of the film. Indeed, the Japanese release poster showcased Draco composited with the 'Say something tell nothing' design of the American poster campaign. The film would go on to be nominated for an Oscar in the Best Visual Effects category, and at the Saturn Awards it won the award for Best Fantasy Film

While *Dragonheart* didn't become a fantasy-movie zeitgeist piece like some of the other movies that he and his Tippett Studio crew have worked on, it remains a movie worth catching up with if you're rounding out your viewing of fantasy movies. In the character design of Draco, we see the creative intelligence that has characterised Phil Tippett's 40 years' of work in fantasy cinema breathing life into *Dragoheart*.



"THE DIRECTION WE WANTED WAS A CHINESE DRAGON"
PHIL TIPPETT

BLENDING THE EXPERIMENTAL SENSIBILITIES OF THE FRENCH NEW WAVE WITH HARD-BOILED DETECTIVE NOIR, ALPHAVILLE GAVE SCI-FI A POWERFUL JOLT. WE HOP INTO A FORD GALAXIE TO REVISIT ALPHAVILLE, WHERE LOGIC IS KING AND FEELINGS ARE ILLEGAL

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

TimeWarp Retro Classic Film

ALPHAVILLE



Film

RUNNING TIME: 99 minutes
RELEASE DATE: 5 May 1965
DIRECTOR: Jean-Luc Godard
WRITER: Jean-Luc Godard
CAST: Eddie Constantine, Anna Karina, Akim Tamiroff

About

Secret agent Lemmy Caution travels from the Outer Planets to Alphaville, where he is to investigate and retrieve defected scientist Professor Von Braun. Alphaville is ruled by the computer Von Braun created: Alpha 60, which has created a society that is purely driven by logic and science. Emotions are outlawed in Alphaville, and visible displays like weeping are punishable by death. Caution poses as a journalist, and recruits the help of Von Braun's daughter Natacha. Can he survive long enough to destroy Alpha 60 and show Natacha the importance of personal expression and feeling?

There's a sequence early on in Jean-Luc Godard's *Alphaville* in which our hard-boiled hero has to deal with a beautiful seductress and an armed intruder in his hotel room in quick succession. The dame gets into the bath that he's been running for himself, while the heel storms in with a quip about being nice to the lady. "Shit, now what?" asks Lemmy Caution, and sets about giving the intruder a kicking, while Godard keeps the camera outside the bathroom window. There's a brief chase through a series of doors in the hotel room as the bad guy flees Caution's bullets, and it's all over in a matter of seconds. "I'm getting rusty," he mutters, before giving the girl a slap. "What's the game?" he asks. "Nothing," she replies. "It's normal." Welcome to Alphaville.

The deadpan fashion in which veteran noir star Eddie Constantine goes about his business, while the action veers into sharply cut slapstick and characters talk about galaxies and distant planets, is some indication that Godard isn't taking every element of this genre mash-up entirely seriously, but the wit and improvisational energy that courses through *Alphaville* makes it truly unique.

Godard was most definitely established as one of the most exciting filmmakers of the Sixties by the time he got around to *Alphaville*, having delivered most of the films that would be considered his masterpieces in the years between 1960 and 1965: *Breathless*, *A Woman Is A Woman*, *Vivre Sa Vie*, *Le Petit Soldat* and *Le Mépris*. The film's lead character, Lemmy Caution, had been around for considerably longer. The American creation of English author Peter Cheyney, Caution was an FBI agent who appeared in novels with titles like *This Man Is Dangerous*, *Dames Don't Care*, *Can Ladies Kill?* and *Your Deal, My Lovely*. He had never appeared in an English-language film. Instead, he was the central character in a series of French films that capitalised on the country's appetite for American culture, staring with *Poison Ivy* in 1953. Constantine was a singer at the time, an American émigré living in Paris, but he matched the producer's description for the character in that he looked like a gangster. He would go on to play the formidable investigator five more times before Godard came calling.

Godard's interest in noir was evident since his first film *Breathless*, in which Jean Paul Belmondo's small-time crook Michel is obsessed with Humphrey Bogart. For *Alphaville*, the filmmaker went one better, throwing a classic detective and the man who played him into a labyrinthine sci-fi mystery. When we meet the character, he has just arrived at the titular city, having travelled in from the outer planets. No wonder he's grouchy.

Lemmy is present under the name of Ivan Johnson and pretending to be a journalist, but he's actually a secret agent who's here to find his predecessor, and the professor who defected from the outer planets to start the sinister world of *Alphaville*: Professor Von Braun. He teams up with Von Braun's daughter Natacha (Anna Karina), who works as one of the programmers of the sinister Alpha 60 machine, and witnesses the truth of this strange world he has arrived in.

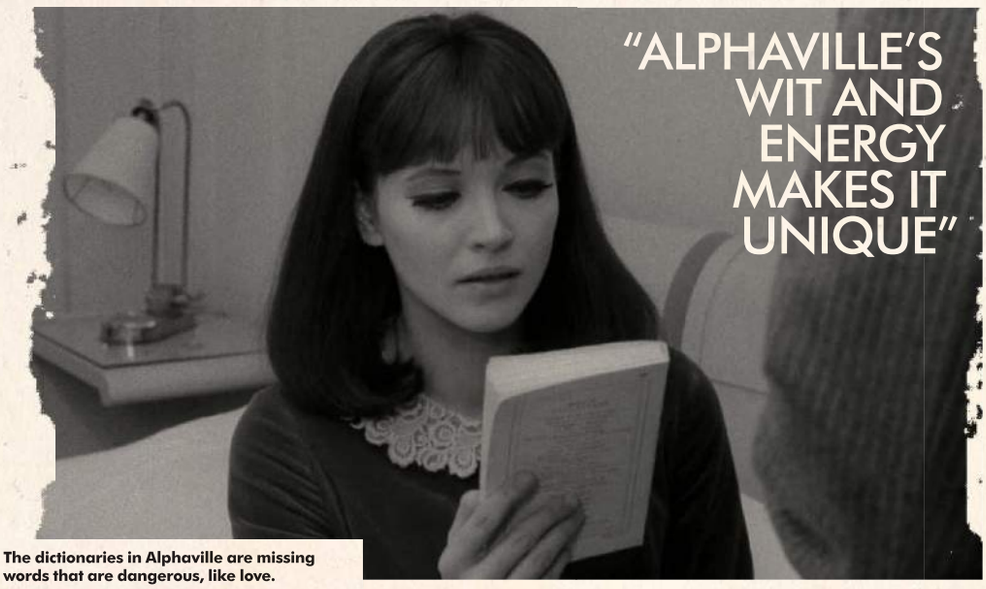
Alphaville has essentially outlawed freedom of expression. If something is not logical, it is forbidden. Words that provoke emotion are banned, and citizens have numbers tattooed on them, but nearly all of them find time to scold Caution for his rudeness with "Yes, I'm fine, don't mention it." In one of the film's most striking sequences, Caution attends an execution ceremony, in which a man is shot for crying after the death of his wife. The event takes



***Alphaville* is a brilliant blend of noir, sci-fi, dark comedy and Godard's own vision.**



Godard indulged his love of film noir by spinning it into this comic sci-fi.



The dictionaries in Alphaville are missing words that are dangerous, like love.

CLASSIC QUOTES

"EVERYTHING HAS BEEN SAID, PROVIDED WORDS DO NOT CHANGE THEIR MEANINGS, AND MEANINGS THEIR WORDS"
ALPHA 60

"THE PAST REPRESENTS ITS FUTURE. IT ADVANCES IN A STRAIGHT LINE, YET IT ENDS BY COMING FULL CIRCLE"
LEMMY CAUTION

"MEN OF YOUR TYPE WILL SOON BECOME EXTINCT. YOU'LL BECOME SOMETHING WORSE THAN DEAD. YOU'LL BECOME A LEGEND"
PROFESSOR VON BRAUN

"NO ONE HAS EVER LIVED IN THE PAST. NO ONE WILL EVER LIVE IN THE FUTURE. THE PRESENT IS THE FORM OF ALL LIFE"
ALPHA 60

"I REFUSE TO BECOME WHAT YOU CALL NORMAL"
LEMMY CAUTION

"YES, I AM AFRAID OF DEATH. BUT FOR A HUMBLE SECRET AGENT, IT'S AN EVERYDAY THING, LIKE WHISKEY. AND I'VE BEEN DRINKING ALL MY LIFE"
LEMMY CAUTION

"IS IT NOT OBVIOUS THAT SOMEONE WHO CUSTOMARILY LIVES IN A STATE OF SUFFERING REQUIRES A DIFFERENT SORT OF RELIGION FROM A PERSON HABITUALLY IN A STATE OF WELL BEING?"
ALPHA 60

"THE SILENCE OF INFINITE SPACE APPALLED ME"
LEMMY CAUTION

"WHY DON'T YOU HURRY UP AND COMMIT SUICIDE? WE NEED THE ROOM FOR OUR COUSIN FROM THE SOUTH"
RED STAR HOTEL MANAGER

"WE MUST ADVANCE TO LIVE. AIM STRAIGHT FOR THOSE YOU LOVE"
CONDEMNED MAN #1



Lemmy's demeanour hides a romantic hero.



Lemmy rushes to help Natacha escape at the film's climax.

place a swimming pool, which the men are shot into before being retrieved by a team of female synchronised swimmers.

This is indicative of Godard's playful approach to the weightier science fiction themes of *Alphaville*. The central message at the core of the film is the importance of the individual, and of poetry, expression and love. Cold logic has led the Alpha 60 to the brink of starting a nuclear war (which Caution must, of course, stop) with the outer planets, while the society has become a terrifyingly calm fascist state.

The contrast between Caution's planet and the one he travels to is made clear by the street art we glimpse at the very start of the film (a crowd of people pushing a tank into the sea, a pair of hands releasing a white dove) and the constant homages to logic and science that we find littered around Alphaville. As Caution grows closer to Natacha, he attempts to instruct her in the ways of emotions, which naturally involves falling in love with her.

Love may not be permitted in Alphaville, but 'sensuality' certainly is. Godard gives the femme fatales of film noir a slight update by assigning them official job titles, as a Seductress Third Class relentlessly accompanies Caution to his room, despite his protestations. Henry Dickson (a wonderful performance by Akim Tarmiroff), the former agent that Caution has come to find, expires while making love to one of these women, but not before giving his friend a final instruction: "Lemmy… conscience… Alpha 60… make… self-destruct… tenderness. Save those who weep." The smoky allure of these dangerous women is now coupled with the kind of nonsensical bureaucracy that is reminiscent of Terry Gilliam's *Brazil*.

If the bureaucracy roots Godard's sense of humour in something real, then the same is true of the film's setting. Paris stands in for Alphaville, with the filmmaker making no real effort to make anything seem futuristic. Caution drives a 'Ford Galaxie', some of the buildings are relatively bright and white, and the electricity board centre was used to house the Alpha 60 computer.

The Alpha 60 (voiced by a man who had his voicebox removed) is certainly unforgettable. It addresses the big questions slowly and deliberately, extolling the importance of logic and explaining why any other society is simply broken. The first time that Caution encounters it, it seems to be delivering a seminar to a group of people (including Natacha). "I left because I couldn't understand a word he was saying," Lemmy tells Natacha. "But it's very simple," she replies. "We learned this evening that death and life are found within the same circle."

Caution later stumps the machine by presenting it with the kind of problems it could never understand. The interrogation sequences are among the film's finest, as Godard surrounds the character with microphones, speaking into the backlit computer fan that responds in that monotonous, deliberate voice.



Eddie Constantine was already established as Lemmy Caution.



Can Natacha counter her logical impulses?

"PERFECT SOCIETIES"

5 future cultures that don't have it all figured out

VALIDS
GATTACA (1997)



1 Ethan Hawke shows the elite that you don't need perfect genes to go to space; you just have to want it.

SOYLENT GREEN EATERS
SOYLENT GREEN (1973)



2 Because you should not always listen to what people tell you to eat. All together now, "SOYLENT GREEN IS…"

LIBRIANS
EQUILIBRIUM (2002)



3 Christian Bale helps enforce emotion suppression in his perfect world until he's shown that he's just being used.



"COLD LOGIC HAS LED THE ALPHA 60 TO THE BRINK OF NUCLEAR WAR"

"What is your religion?" asks Alpha 60. "I believe in the inspirations of conscience," replies Caution.

It's great to watch Constantine deliver his ideological rhetoric with the same bullish deadpan as he spits his put-downs. When Alpha 60 says, "I shall calculate so that failure is impossible," Caution hits back with, "I shall fight so that failure is possible." He answering the question of "Do you know what illuminates the night?" with the answer, "Poetry."

The opposition to logic is reflected in Godard's experimentation with form. Images and words recur frequently; flashbulbs go off, the words 'Nor' and 'Sud' appear, and at one point the needle seems to have become stuck on the record of Caution's narration. "Natasha spoke to me in her pretty sphinx voice, pretty sphinx, pretty sphinx, pretty sphinx, pretty sphinx." There's also the none-more French New Wave sequence in which Natacha and Caution pose for Godard's camera, looking straight at the lens as she holds her hands in front of his face.

As playful as it is, the ending of the film does seem to be sincere, as Caution drives Natacha away from the city she's just helped to destroy. While the residents are unable to cope with the death of Alpha 60, there's hope for Natacha if she can just explain how she feels.

Ordering her not to look back, Caution refuses her request for help. "Help yourself; then you will be saved. If you don't, you're as lost as the dead of Alphaville." She is saved by the expression of a single, non-more powerful feeling: "I… you… love. I love you."



Anna Karina was one of Godard's most frequent collaborators.





Alphaville is part of *Godard: The Essential Collection*, out now on Blu-ray from Studiocanal.

WATCH FIRST



ORPHEUS (1950)

Cocteau retells the story of Orpheus and Eurydice, which Godard references frequently in *Alphaville*.

WATCH NEXT



BARBARELLA (1968)

Jane Fonda stars as an intergalactic agent charged with stopping the nefarious Durand in this classic.

YOUR TAKE ON THE CLASSIC

WHAT YOU THOUGHT @SCIFINOW



It was an interesting experiment. Brave of Godard. Probably visually influential more than great story." **@ParsonsFiction**



Dreadful,. Near unwatchable. Godard pretending his banal 6th form codphilosophy witterings constitute a script." **@Elab49**



The best Philip K Dick movie he never wrote. **@teenmethuselah**



Brilliant, but haven't seen it for years **@kath_brentford**



Fantastic, stylish film...lingers in mind long afterwards. **@Eddie1_16**

OCEANIANS

1984 (1984)



4 Big Brother is watching you, and he's making sure you do exactly what you're told. If you discover your freedom, you're in trouble.

ALLIANCE CITIZENS

SERENITY (2005)



5 You might think you're living in harmony, but the Pax also created the horrifying space cannibals the Reavers.

A story so shocking, so threatening,
will frighten you beyond all imagination.

THE ENTITY

Based on a true story.

FLASHBACK

THE ENTITY

OVERSHADOWED BY THE RELEASE OF TOBE HOOPER'S POLTERGEIST, 1982'S THE ENTITY WAS ARGUABLY MORE CONTROVERSIAL CONSIDERING ITS SINISTER SPIN ON THE INVISIBLE MAN CONCEPT, WHERE BARBARA HERSHEY IS HORRIFICALLY RAPED BY AN UNSEEN ASSAILANT. WE SPEAK TO ACTOR DAVID LABIOSA ABOUT THE MAKING OF THE MOVIE AND HIS TAKE ON MATTERS OTHERWORLDLY…

WORDS **OLIVER PFEIFFER**

Everyone has their own interpretations toward what constitutes as a horror movie. Sidney Furie didn't think he was making one with *The Entity*, in which an unseen assailant torments and violently molests young mother-of-three Barbara Hershey in her family home. Instead, the filmmaker referred to his 1982 shocker rather modestly as a supernatural suspense thriller. The relentless ordeal that the character, Carla Moran, goes through is generally horrific and disturbing, so for argument's sake, yes, this is a horror movie – a supernatural horror movie.

Despite being over 30 years old, *The Entity* isn't for the faint-hearted either. If you thought Sansa Stark received rough treatment (notably off-screen) in Season Five of *Game Of Thrones* then you'll be left gasping by the (notably on-screen) no-holds-barred brutality that is inflicted on the poor female protagonist here.

During the progression of the film, Carla Moran is seemingly raped multiple times, thrown around rooms, thrust up against walls, repeatedly fondled and beaten up with jarring brutality. There's certainly nothing to take lightly here, and Furie was even accused of apparent cinematic insensitivity by some critics due to the graphic style in which these sequences were shot.

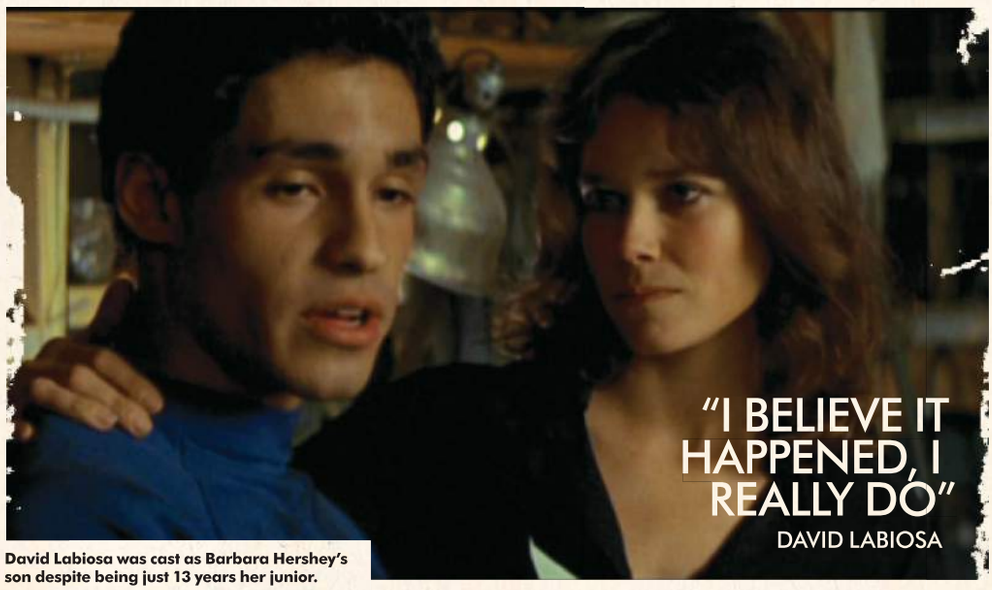
This also brings up an interesting question regarding the validity of the true events that unfold. *The Entity* is in fact based on alleged paranormal encounters involving single, suburban mother-of-four Doris Bither at her Culver City, California home in 1974. Actor David Labiosa, who played Hershey's on-screen teenage son Billy in the movie, certainly buys into the credibility.

"I believe it happened, I really do. It's not so much from reading about this story; it's what I've experienced in my own life," admits the now 52-year-old actor. "I'm fascinated by the paranormal, and I've seen so many things and read about other experiences. I'm sure some of them are made up, but I don't think a lot of these things can be denied. I believe in life after death, I believe that energy doesn't die, and that some people go on and evolve and reincarnate, while others get trapped in a different dimension. I know it sounds very Shirley MacLaine, but that's where I stand."

The Entity could have been even more distributing had a controversial dream sequence in which Carla is forced by the demon to have incestuous thoughts about her son remained in the movie. "Part of the reason I got the part was that there was an element in the book about the son and the mother having a sexual energy, therefore they wanted somebody on the cusp of manhood," reveals Labiosa. "We had this great scene, which was in the book, where she looks at me and gets all horny, and I have my shirt off and I'm working on the car. We shot it, and I was working out like crazy to look good, but then they said, 'Oh, we can't use it – it's too much!' and they cut it out of the movie. I was very upset – I thought it would've been great. I think they would've left it in now, but back in 1980 it was just too much incest!"

Certainly provocative for the times, the incestuous element is now merely implied by a psychologist character (played by the late Ron Silver) during a consultation. In reality, it was reported that Bither had a rather dysfunctional relationship with her three sons, who allegedly had resentful feelings toward their mother. One of the actual psychologists even attributed this to enticing all the paranormal activity in the first place.

An eerie coincidental case of life imitating art occurred when Labiosa was injured during the filming of a scene where Billy is struck by bolts of electricity and flung by the invisible demon when he attempts to intervene. "It was strange, because it wasn't in the script, but it was in the book," explains the actor. "A lot of where you see us flying through the air is pretty much



David Labiosa was cast as Barbara Hershey's son despite being just 13 years her junior.

us throwing ourselves against the wall. So of course I threw myself against the fireplace, and when I landed I hit my hand and broke my arm! As a result I was written out of certain scenes, and my part was reduced. So I was pretty upset about that."

Not that Labiosa wasn't grateful for securing the part of Barbara Hershey's son, especially given that in reality, the actor is merely 13 years younger than the actress. "I was way too old for the part, and Barbara was way too young to be my mother. She was about 34 then, and I'm already 52 now, so she couldn't have had me when she was ten! It was impossible," admits Labiosa. "They shot a part in the film that explained why I'm so old, and basically she said she got pregnant at 14 and her husband dies in a motorcycle accident, which wasn't even in the book – they just did that to justify why I was so old and why I looked Hispanic!"

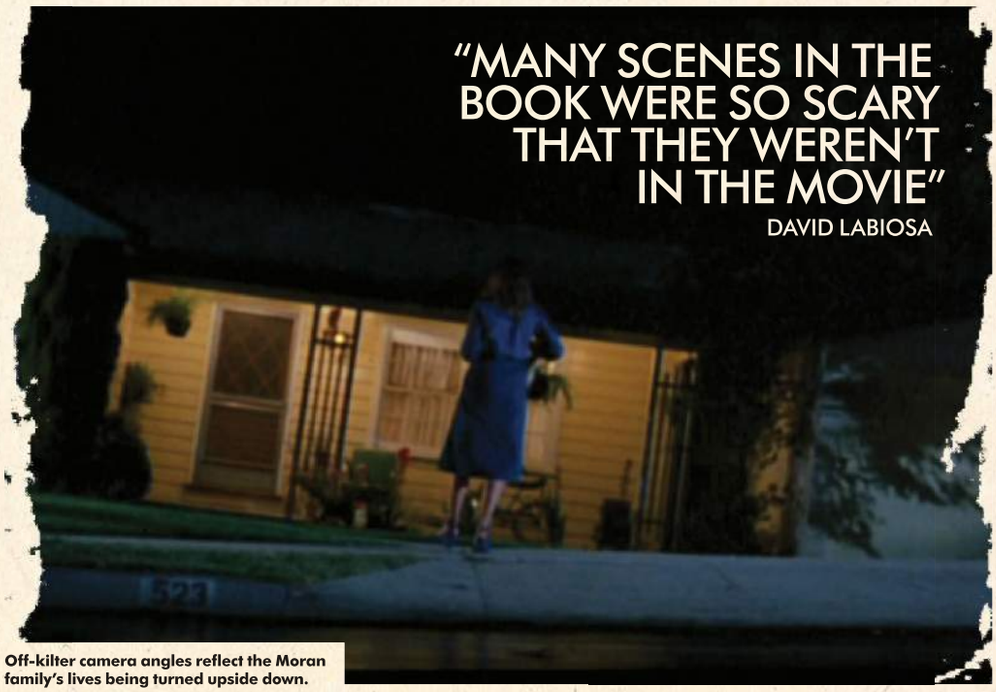
Despite subsequent reports on the contrary, Labiosa reveals that in fact the real Carla Moran – alleged victim Doris Bither – was briefly present sometime during the four-month shoot. "She apparently came to the set, but she didn't want anybody to know who she was, so when she arrived she did it anonymously."

Something that wasn't left anonymous was the skillful work of late special effects maestro Stan Winston. The future *Terminator*, *Aliens* and *Jurassic Park* FX wiz was responsible for the rather risqué scene in which Moran's breasts are graphically fondled by the invisible entity. The character's body was in fact completely prosthetic for this sequence, with the manipulation created using imprints of fingers that touch the body through a specially designed hot air stream system.



A lot of lighting-up was required for this psychological diagnosis!

"MANY SCENES IN THE BOOK WERE SO SCARY THAT THEY WEREN'T IN THE MOVIE"
DAVID LABIOSA



Off-kilter camera angles reflect the Moran family's lives being turned upside down.

One of the criticisms levelled at *The Entity*, however, was its rather ham-fisted psychological analysis, with the overtly skeptical Dr Phil Sneiderman (Ron Silver) simplistically attributing Carla's 'invented demon' to childhood trauma, a fear of sex and her apparently problematic history with men. He also claims the marks on her body were self-inflicted (even though they would have been impossible for her to reach).

Despite being heavily targeted by some critics at the time, who were overall less than enthusiastic upon its release, *The Entity* has subsequently secured devotion from fans and filmmakers alike.

Martin Scorsese placed the film (alongside other underestimated chillers like *The Changeling* and *Isle Of The Dead*) in his 2009 poll of 'Scariest Horror Movies of All Time', "A truly terrifying picture. The banal setting, the California-modern house, accentuate the unnerving quality" he wrote. In the same year, Quentin Tarantino paid homage to Charles Bernstein's pounding score from the notorious 'bath attack' sequence by inserting it into *Inglourious Basterds* during the tense restaurant scene where the sinister Hans Landa (Christoph Waltz) is reunited with escapee Shosanna (Melanie Laurent).

"I thought there was so many scenes in the book that were so scary that were not in the movie, which made me angry," reflects Labiosa honestly. "But I think the film holds up because of Barbara's performance – I think she's such a good actress. She's not over the top; she's very watchable. Also, there's Sidney's expert direction – so it's really the acting and the director. The script really wasn't that great, I think it could've been so much better and (referring to several crude electrical entity FX



Barbara Hershey gives one of her most gutsy performances in *The Entity*.

sequences), the special effects weren't that great either – so what have you got? The actors and the director!"

Labiosa does, however, attribute the film for consequently bringing to light similar cases of paranormal attacks. "Since the film, there's been a lot of other cases now with women saying they're being molested by these things," says the actor. "I watched a show where this woman claimed she was being molested and touched every night, and she was crying hysterically. It's hard for me to believe that somebody is making up a story when they cry so hysterically… it's hard for actors to even cry like that!"

Blumhouse Productions has recently announced its intentions to remake *The Entity*, courtesy of *The Conjuring* writers Chad and Carey Hayes with modern horror master James Wan as a producer. Labiosa makes some interesting observations regarding the parallels between *The Entity* and another Blumhouse production. "I watched *Insidious* recently, and it features Barbara Hershey, and it's almost like *The Entity*: the continuation," observes the actor. "She's playing the grandmother now, and her adult son (Patrick Wilson) has a family, and is now being tortured by what she used to be tortured by."

Overlooking its dumbed-down psychology and rather hokum climax, in which the demon is temporarily frozen using liquid helium during an elaborate experiment in a reconstructed house, Furie's *The Entity* is still worth revisiting. It has a gutsy, powerhouse performance from Hershey, and its scenes of brutal physical confrontation still retain the power to shock and unnerve despite being over three decades old. It's a disturbing horror film to endure, for sure, and certainly not for the faint of heart, while a final closing remark by the titular entity (along with a disclaimer) eerily hint that the brooding terror is far from over for the Moran family.



The Entity is available to buy on DVD now, distributed by 20th Century Fox.



Carla Moran's claims are initially met with great scepticism.



Is Hershey's role in *Insidious* a tip-of-the-hat to her earlier role here?



Ron Silver plays a doctor who finds it difficult to buy into the supernatural shenanigans.

IT REALLY HAPPENED

5 OTHER MOVIE HAUNTINGS THAT ARE SUPPOSEDLY BASED ON TRUE EVENTS



1. THE EXORCIST *(1973)*

William Friedkin's chilling classic was based on William Peter Blatty's equally iconic novel, which in turn was inspired by the actual 1949 exorcism of a young boy from Cottage City, Maryland. In addition, titular exorcist Father Merrin (Max von Sydow) was based on actual British archaeologist Gerald Lankester Harding, who the author met in Beirut and who excavated the cave where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found.



2. AUDREY ROSE *(1977)*

Before *The Entity*, Frank De Felitta adapted the events of his 1975 novel *Audrey Rose* for this psychological horror film directed by *The Haunting* veteran Robert Wise. It stars Anthony Hopkins as a stranger who tries to convince a married couple that their daughter is in fact his late daughter reincarnated. Creepily, it was based on the author's own eerie experience of having an occultist tell him that his son's instant piano playing mastery was down to an "incarnation leak".



3. THE AMITYVILLE HORROR *(1979)*

The original 'based on true events' paranormal template, this concerned the reportedly real hauntings of the Lutz family, who believed they'd struck a bargain when they purchased a spacious home at a cut-down-price due to the building's sordid mass-murdered family history, which literally came back to haunt them! A well-publicised lawsuit, seven sequels, a remake and five subsequent film outings followed – the latest of which, *Amityville: The Reawakening* – promisingly has Jason Blum attached as producer.



4. THE CONJURING *(2013)* & ANNABELLE *(2014)*

Well kinda… it's a bit of a spin-off from the Amityville series, given that the real-life paranormal investigators of that haunting – namely Ed and Lorraine Warren – feature as the demonologists here. Also, *Conjuring* spin-off *Annabelle* was loosely based on the real case of a possessed raggedy doll, which (a la *The Conjuring*) the Warrens did indeed subsequently encase in their home-made Occult Museum.



5. THE CONJURING 2: THE ENFIELD GHOST *(2016)*

Timothy Spall was reportedly reluctant to sign up to recent chilling UK TV series *The Enfield Haunting* due to being so spooked out by this unnerving true-life incident. It involves the strange occurrences that happened to the Hodgson family at their suburban home in the titular north London Borough in the Seventies. James Wan's follow-up to *The Conjuring* will bring it to the big screen, with the Warrens returning to take on the spooky case.

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DO YOU BELONG ON THE ENTERPRISE OR ARE YOU A STARFLEET REJECT? HOW MUCH DO YOU REMEMBER OF STAR TREK: ENTERPRISE? FIND OUT WITH OUR QUIZ!

IT'S BEEN A LONG ROAD

1. What is the Enterprise's registry number?
2. What is the name of the Vulcan ambassador to Earth?
3. In what year did the Enterprise first launch?
4. What is Trip's real first name?
5. What is Hoshi Sato's job on the Enterprise?

GETTING FROM THERE TO HERE

6. The Enterprise's chief medical officer Dr Phlox has how many wives?
7. What kind of pet did Sub-Commander T-Pol have when she was young?
8. How many Eagle Scout merit badges does Malcolm Reed hold?
9. Who received a copy of *The Cosmos A To Z* for their eighth birthday?
10. What is the name of Jonathan Archer's dog?

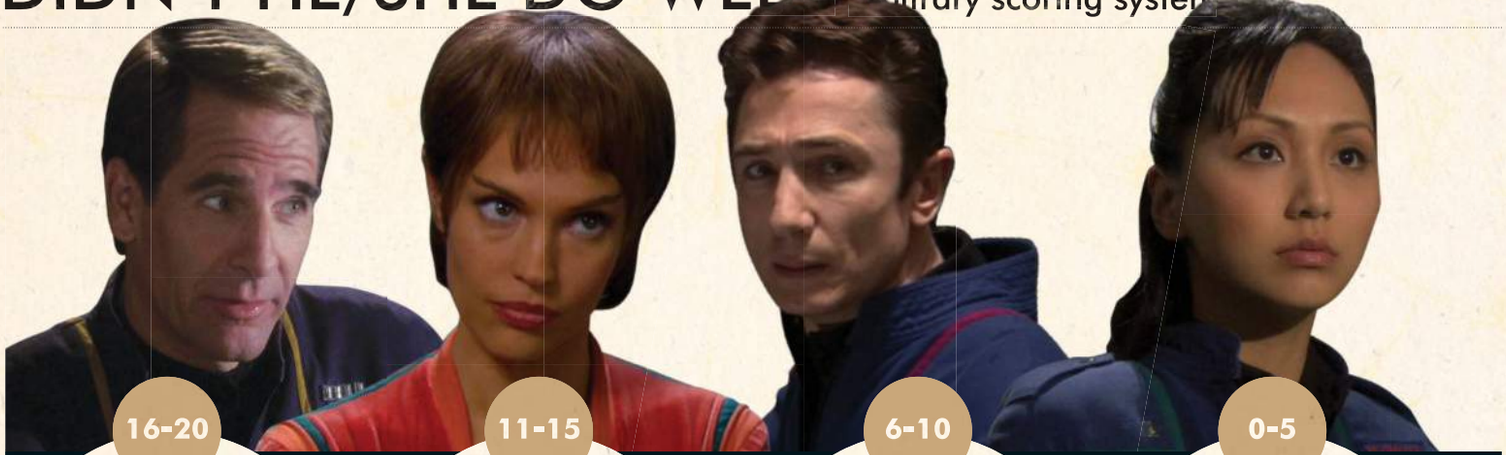
IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME

11. What does MACO stand for?
12. Name three of the five living Xindi species.
13. What is the name of the cargo ship that Travis Mayweather was born on board?
14. Which historian considered Archer to be the "greatest explorer of the 22nd century"?
15. Who was imprisoned in a Tandaran prison camp along with Archer?

BUT MY TIME IS FINALLY NEAR

16. What are the two titles of the show's theme song?
17. From which years did the show run?
18. How many episodes did *Star Trek: Enterprise* eventually run for?
19. What is the title of the show's finale?
20. Who wrote the series' premiere episode?

DIDN'T HE/SHE DO WELL? See how you did with our arbitrary scoring system



16-20

CAPTAIN ARCHER

Congratulations! You are the coolest person in the galaxy. Some say that quiz points are a reflection of the soul, and you have a lot of both. Charm and a thirst for adventure will get you everywhere.

11-15

SUB-COMMANDER T'POL

As a proud member of the Vulcan race, you already had a head start. Keep doing what you are doing because it's obviously working really well for you. You'll be promoted in no time.

6-10

LIEUTENANT REED

You're a sound fella, but you have trouble speaking to quizmasters and get tongue-tied and flustered when you don't know the answer. You just need to sit back, relax and apply yourself.

0-5

ENSIGN SATO

Your biggest problem is you never have faith in yourself. But trust us, the people around you value your intelligence, talent and spirit a lot more than you think. They'd be nowhere without you.

ANSWERS: **1.** NX-01 **2.** SOVAL **3.** 2151 **4.** CHARLES **5.** COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER **6.** THREE **7.** A SEHLAT **8.** 28 **9.** JONATHAN ARCHER **10.** PORTHOS **11.** MILITARY ASSAULT COMMAND OPERATIONS **12.** AQUATICS, INSECTOIDS, REPTILES, ARBOREALS, HUMANOIDS **13.** ECS HORIZON **14.** JOHN GILL **15.** TRAVIS MAYWEATHER **16.** 'FAITH OF THE HEART', 'WHERE MY HEART WILL TAKE ME' **17.** 2001-2005 **18.** 98 **19.** 'THESE ARE THE VOYAGES...' **20.** RICK BERMAN & BRANNON BRAGA

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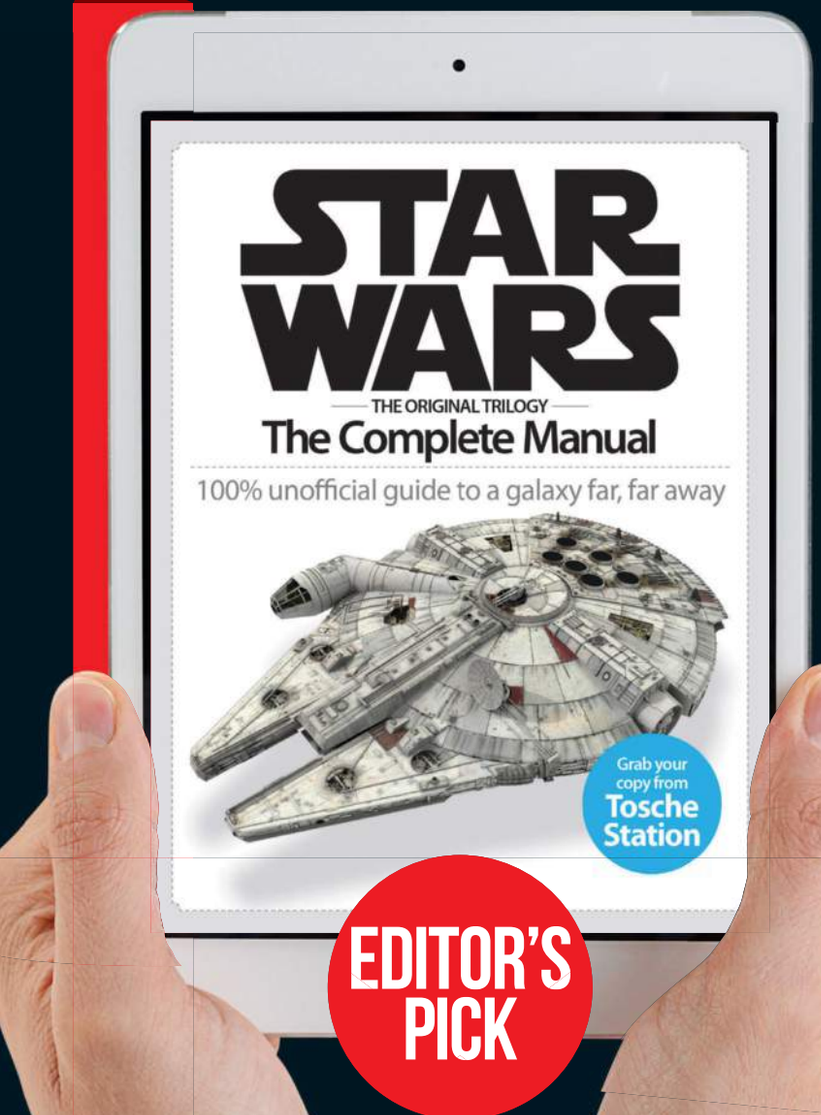




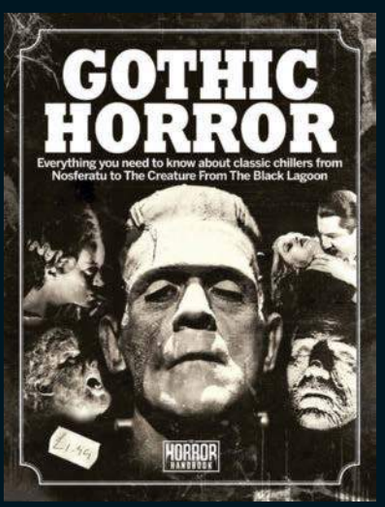


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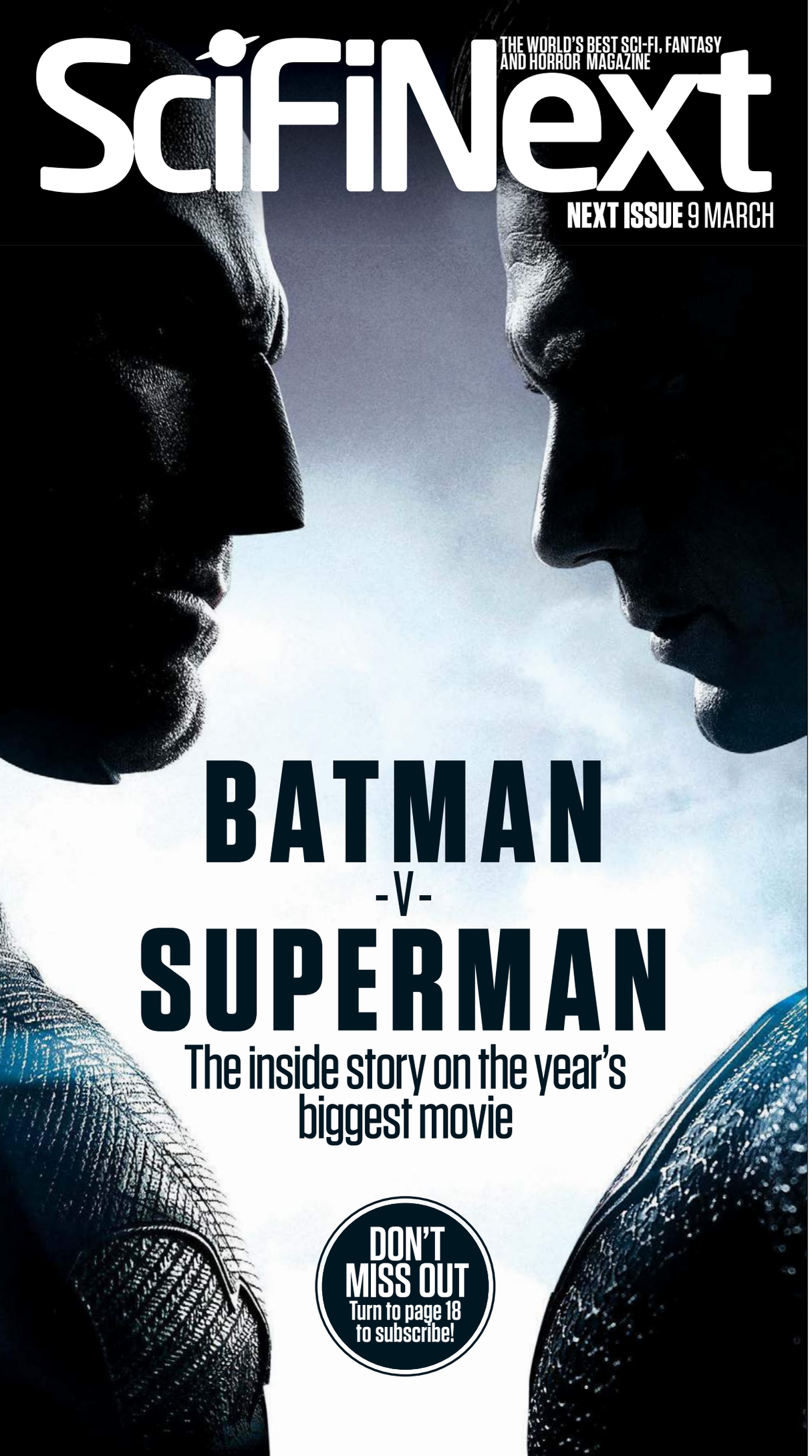








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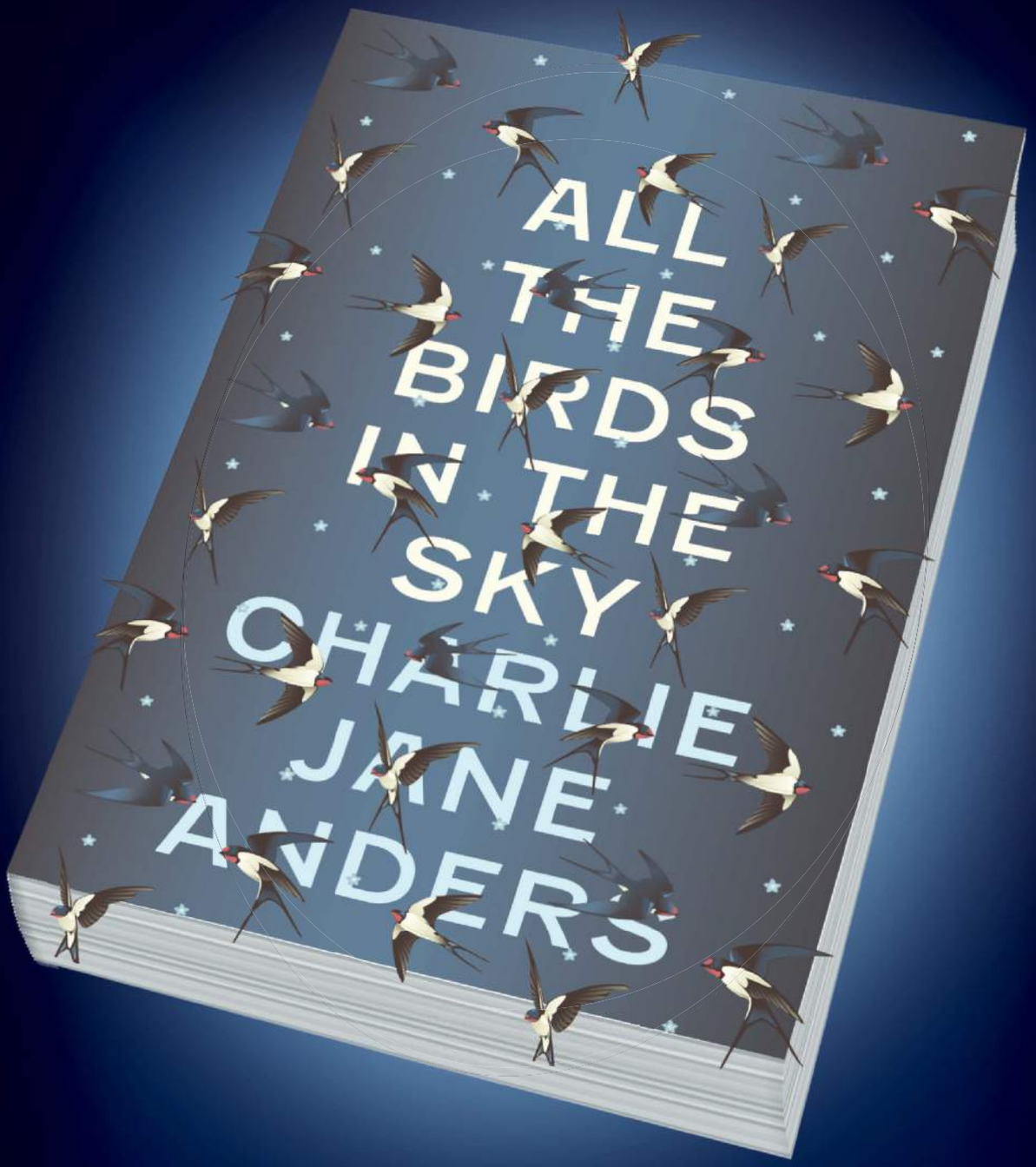
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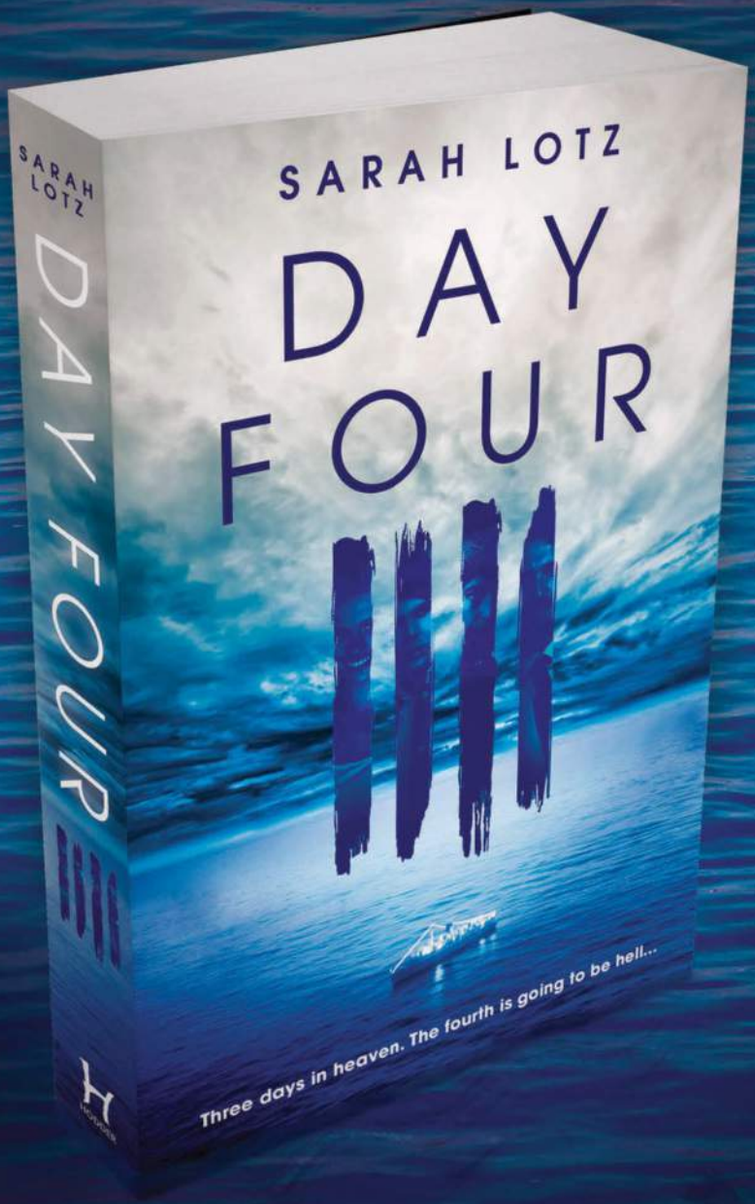


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